



PREDESTINATION:

FROM

GENESIS

TO

REVELATION



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These writings were originally published separately in a publication entitled “The Remnant” of which Elder James Poole was the editor at the time. For convenience sake, they have been placed together in this e-book. The reference for each “Number” is at the end of the section. I don’t believe that he completed the series but I hope and trust that what is here will prove to be a blessing to you the reader as it has been to me!

Tom Adams

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Number 1

PREFACE

DEFINITION

1. Theol. the doctrine that a) God foreordained everything that would happen b) God predestines certain souls to salvation and, esp. in Calvinism, others to damnation 2. a predestinating or being predestinated; destiny; fate Webster's New World Dictionary Second College Edition. 1984.

It should be amply clear from the above definition that the Bible alone must be our final standard for understanding the meaning of Bible words. Webster, like others not acquainted with the truth, assigns predestination an equality with fate. Those having even a casual understanding of the two words recognize that predestination and fate are opposites. Predestination is the determination of all things by God, and fate is the determination of nothing.

Since the words, predestinate, and predestinated are found in the Bible, (Romans 8.29,30; Ephesians 1.5,11) we can then unmistakably conclude that predestination is a Bible topic, no matter what form the word takes. Other words like will, purpose, decree, and counsel, when used of God's government, all mean substantially the same.

We are, however, not so much concerned with putting these specific words to use as we are with determining the overall message of the Bible to us regarding the magnitude of God's government. For instance, does the Bible teach that God rules all, without exception, or is He in some matters a passive spectator, more or less? By "rule all," we mean that the Scriptures say God totally superintends every event in such a manner that they all, without deviation, come to pass precisely in correspondence with His will, purpose, counsel, and predestination. If heaven is His throne, and earth is His footstool, will He allow other forces to shape their destiny? The events in time are not staged somehow like a chess match, with men and devils making their move, and then God reacting. Rather, as we believe, all things fall out exactly as God would have them to fall out without either assistance or hindrance. Assuming God has always had a plan, the scope of which covers all things, both now and forever, can there be anything that might possibly frustrate it in the least? If God, or His plan, could in the least be frustrated, would He really be worthy of our worship and adoration as the supreme ruler?

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

God is worthy of His Title, and cannot be frustrated either in His will or the accomplishment of it, nor can there possibly be anything unknown to Him. Neither can the matters that seem the least important to man escape His eternal scrutiny simply because they appear insignificant to us. We submit that God has perfectly, and that from eternity, known all things knowable, yea, even all things we might describe as unknowable. It matters not the importance or value man places on certain matters; they are all alike perfectly known by God, simply because He is God. His wisdom is boundless, limitless, all encompassing, and possesses the fullest capacity for total cognizance. He views the tiny sparrow, and the groveling worm prior to its existence; nor is man's going hid from Him. All creatures alike, from the least form of life to the greatest beast, is open and naked before Him. This immense wisdom, we learn from the Bible, from experience, and revelation, is the knowledge of God. It is a purely

wonderful, blessed knowledge, and sweet to His little children to contemplate, though they scarcely know the thousandth part of it. “Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Psalm 139.3-6).” We are persuaded from our brief contemplation of this sublime subject then, that God’s knowledge does embrace all, in time and eternity, without the possibility of any exceptions, just as David described it in Psalm 139 and elsewhere. Otherwise, God could not be said to know all things. At best He would be only wiser to some degree than others, if it could be possible that He did not know all things, both now and forever.

It must be noted as well that if God did not know all things from eternity, and that there were some things He did not know until they “chanced into existence” then He would be said to be wiser after learning them than before. Hence the great God that told us that He changed not actually would change in the degree of His understanding and wisdom, if it were possible for Him to learn things during or after the fact.

Since God then does know all things, at all times, we must conclude all things are certain to transpire just as He knows them, or His knowledge would be deficient, at least to the degree that He failed to know something. Since all things transpire just as God knows them, then He is certainly willing for them to be just as they are. If God were unwilling for anything to be what it was, then what force gave existence to that which occurred outside His will? If, for instance, God saw from all eternity that the rivers would run into the seas, can there be a power to nullify His view of the river’s certain path? Moreover, what set in motion the path of the river in the first place? Was it the will and purpose of God, or did it just chance to go where it did? No! Simply put, those things which God from all eternity saw, from the twists and turns of a river bed to the salvation of poor sinner, are decreed to be just as He saw them. We may well say too that He saw the bend in the river and the deliverance of His elect just as He decreed them. Or again, we can say He pre-ordained their course. This is predestination, and is fully commensurate to that which God, in His unerring wisdom, knows. Anything less than the predestination of all things renders God’s knowledge to be cogitation or guesswork; the course of a creek, and the redemption of His children included. If the things which God from all eternity knew were not based on the certainty of predestination, then they could not with certainty be known. How could they be certainly known if they may, or may not, fall out as He knew them? They cannot be certainly known if not predicated on something! That something is predestination. If not predestination, by what then are they made certain? We would assert in summary that if God did not decree the certainty of the flow of water in a river, every last drop of it, then the end of His little flock is equally uncertain.

Predestination is a compound word. pre, mean-before hand, and destination, meaning the end result. Should there be anything, a person or event, that does not have its destination determined before it occurs, then it cannot be certain to come to pass; hence its prospects of taking place are left to vagaries or chance. From cover to cover, the Bible is replete with topical pronouncements showing how God’s predestination embraces all, and thus makes it certain. If the Lord wills, we shall show from every book in the Bible, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation, examples of God’s predestination. We will not examine those often used texts, but rather some of those scriptures that might, when first read, be considered more ordinary.

GENESIS

“And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins (Genesis 35.11).”

God told Jacob to be fruitful and multiply. Was God simply engaging in casual conversation with Jacob, or was it His determinate will that a nation and a company of nations would issue from his bowels? If this was mere conversation, then Jacob may or may not beget seed. Hence, Judah, and all others in the royal line from which Jesus the Christ came might just as well not be born. But Jacob was not advised to get fruitful, but rather to be fruitful. To us, and we believe to all others that see God as supreme, God directed Jacob to be just what He eternally determined for him to be, and Jacob could fail just as quickly as God could change His mind in the matter. Jacob was just as sure to be fruitful and beget nations as God was sure He purposed him to do so. The force of God’s directive compels us to believe that there never was a time when God had not purposed for this multiplication of nations to transpire. And God always knew what He would instruct Jacob to do; hence it was always His will. It was predestinated.

It must be recognized as well, that everything that could possibly be associated with Jacob fulfilling this directive must as well be governed by God’s eternal purpose. Otherwise, something, or someone, might hinder Jacob in doing as God directed. For instance, Esau would certainly kill his brother Jacob if circumstances allowed; thus he must be hindered from carrying out his evil intentions. This hindering must as well be predestinated or else it too might just as well fail as succeed. God did impede him, and Jacob was secure from this impending danger, though he knew it not. Suppose too that Jacob had by chance fathered thirteen daughters instead of twelve sons and one daughter. According to the Arminian method of reckoning things the odds were fifty-fifty. Then what would have become of the twelve tribes? The Levites to serve the tabernacle? Joseph to deliver the family from the great famine? Judah to continue the line to Christ? And so, on and on we might go. The Soft-shell suggests that God foreknew how things would be and providentially ruled and over-ruled. But...if God foreknew the way it would be, why would He have to do any over-ruling since it must be as He foreknew it? And we would remind those that prefer to pass off God’s government on the expression “providence” that the word is used only once in the Bible, and then it is used by Tertullus, an Arminian orator, to butter up Felix (Acts 24.2). The simple facts are that God foreknew Jacob would bring forth nations because He had before determined the issue.

Genesis 35.11 can only be understood in the context of the predestination of all things.

EXODUS

“For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in (Exodus 14.3).”

We must first say of this text that it could have no possible validity whatsoever if the text in Genesis 35.11 was not made certain by God’s predestination. Had not Jacob sired twelve sons there would be no Israelites in the land of Egypt for Pharaoh to boast over with such contemptuous terms. Each text in the Bible, from Genesis 1.1 to Revelation 22.21 must be certain for all others to have a corresponding

certainty. How else could Pharaoh express what God said he would if something could have altered circumstances in such a way as to make his statement impossible?

God told Moses, “For Pharaoh will say...” To us, it seems a certainty that every thought, opinion, circumstance, and anything else directly or remotely associated with bringing Pharaoh to say what he would, must be exactly fitted to prompt him to speak. And to speak just what God said he would. Anything else would falsify either in part or in whole, the word of God to Moses as it is recorded in Exodus 14.3. We believe the universe could crash into rubble sooner than the word of God could fail, here or elsewhere. We know of nothing other than predestination possessing sufficient certainty to make this pronouncement inevitable.

The occasion of the directive God gave Moses was the departure of Israel out of the land of Egypt. They had fled, bag and baggage, after the great event of the Lord passing through the land to destroy the firstborn of the Egyptians. Point by point, all that God had shown and told Moses was being fulfilled. Who could reasonably expect then that what God had said here concerning Pharaoh’s speech might have even a slight possibility of failing? As sure as God is true, Pharaoh would say exactly what was foretold for him to say. Could this be anything then, other than the predestination of God in execution?

“They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.” Pharaoh was no bumbling idiot. He was wise enough to rule the greatest nation on earth at that time. However, he was totally mistaken, both in his perception of what was transpiring and this pronouncement. First, he obviously believed he was in control of events, despite the constant series of plagues God had thwarted him with, and second, he misread the consequences of the Israelite’s departure. Like all others born with an Arminian nature, he was, after repeated evidences, still blind to the power and purpose of God. His conclusions were naturally erroneous: “I’ve got them now; there is no way they can escape.” We remind the reader, this was just what God has prophesied for him to say, even though it was not a correct summary of the situation. What else can be determined than God deluded him into saying this? If we were to do something like that we would be called a deceiver, and be accused of exerting false influence over another, but not so with God. “With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his (Job 12.16).” God had sent him a strong delusion that he should believe a lie (II Thessalonians 2.11). Did Pharaoh have a legitimate right to complain, “Why hast thou made me thus (Romans 9.20)?” Neither does the workmongers of today, though complain they will.

If the Lord wills, we shall continue this subject in our next issue.

THE REMNANT

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Number 2

LEVITICUS

“And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years (Leviticus 25.8).”

During the forty years sojourn of the tribes of Israel in the wilderness Jehovah fully instructed them regarding all aspects of their lives. Central among these instructions was the commands to keep various sabbaths. Generally when the matter of a sabbath comes up we think of the seventh day sabbath. However, this was only one of a number of different sabbaths instituted for their benefit. The seventh day sabbath certainly was emblematic of the rest of God after creation, and prefigured the spiritual rest for God’s children for all time in the finished work of Christ; a rest from their labors and a rest in His.

There was, as well, the sabbath on the first day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23.24); the sabbath on the tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23.27,32); the double sabbath of the feast (Leviticus 23.39); the sabbath of the seventh year (Leviticus 25.4). The sabbath mentioned in our text at the heading was to take place on the fiftieth year of reckoning. It appears that the reckoning began in the 21st year after the Israelites entered into the land of promise, for they were seven years in subduing the land and another seven years in its distribution; thus adding another seven years, up to and including the first land rest sabbath, would be 21 years. We can determine then that the first jubilee sabbath was about seventy years after the 12 tribes crossed Jordan with the ark going before. We sincerely believe this time frame of seventy years complements the historical basis to our understanding of the purpose of God for His people in the jubilee sabbath. We hope to explain later.

Assuming there will be objectors to our view, we nevertheless state that the directives of our text, Leviticus 25.8, were absolutely predestinated to take place; exactly as God had said they would.

It is to us a very faint, if not contemptible, view of God to read the details and exactness with which He ordered the lives of the Israelites, and then to say this was all left to chance, free-will, the whim of sinners, and the inveterate cunning of Satan to foil this God-established government. Surely the most timid of believers would admit this was more than a wish list for Israel to consider. The sabbaths were periods of rest with paramount meaning and the weight of overwhelming-implied evidence is that God’s purpose was for them to be observed without fail. Some soft-shell will no doubt ask, “But did they obey or not?” “Did they not fail to observe the sabbaths of God and bring down judgments on their heads?” For those that hold to a limited view of the government of God these are natural and obvious questions, for it surely appears that Israel did most miserably fail to follow the sabbath directives, as well as most other regulations Jehovah enumerated to them. Predestinarians see a grander unfolding of events, however, that brought compliance and the commandments into harmony with one another.

An example from another period in Israel’s travels will, we strongly feel, give us a case in point. Jonah, the son of Amittai, was instructed by the word of the Lord to “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me (Jonah 1.2).” Did he go? Yes! Yes, he went; but not at first, and not as might be expected by the advocates of choice. Because Jonah did not

immediately hoof it off to Nineveh does not at all prove the purpose of God was violated. Much to the contrary; it shows us that there was more in God's plan than simply alerting the Ninevites to their wickedness. Jonah had several vital lessons to learn, this was the method God would use to teach him. Going down to Joppa, and paying his fare to Tarshish was Jonah's intended way of fleeing from the presence of the Lord. However, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jeremiah 10.23)." Again, "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps (Proverbs 16.9)." If we can believe these two texts, and we do, then Jonah's plan (way) was crossed by God's plan (way).

Among other things, Jonah learned the high cost of low living, the swift retribution for slow service, and the woes of will-worship. But there were greater things to be learned in his circuitous route to Nineveh. And, we may add, greater things for us as well. We will mention only one. Jonah was cast overboard by the frightened mariners, and rather than meeting his expected doom in the deep, he was swallowed by a great fish the Lord had prepared to extricate him from his awful plight. This was no random meeting of fish and man. The fish had been prepared before Jonah needed it. Surely it would have been a pity, and waste of fish-preparing as well, if Jonah had not gone astray. Then too, if Jonah had talked his way out of being tossed overboard, the great fish would have proved useless for the task God prepared him to carry out.

We suppose, with some justification, that fish have habits just like other creatures, great and small. Had this fish's peculiar habits inclined him in some other direction than towards the ship, what then would have happened to Jonah, not to mention the plan of God to save him from drowning? Or suppose too that the whale was busy at that time munching on a school of smaller fish and disregarded this castoff. Rather ridiculous isn't it? If God did indeed prepare this great fish to do what it did, then at least two things are clear. First, God had from all eternity purposed to send a fish to rescue Jonah, and second, it could not fail, or God's purpose would fail as well. Unless one believes in a patchwork plan for the government of creation they must admit to predestination, this incident included.

When Jonah had been blessed to sufficiently reflect on matters at hand during his entrapment in the whale's belly, he concluded expressing his ponderings with the following: "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2.9)." Jonah had now learned that getting into the whale rather than drowning was the Lord's salvation. He as well knew now that getting out of the whale's belly would be the Lord's salvation. He must have also seen the salvation of the Lord in ordering his steps to this place where he could even learn about salvation. It is safe to say, that at that moment, Jonah could see that all that took place, past, present, and future was the Lord's salvation.

Finally, what we have arrived at is the eternal certainty of the whole incident regarding Jonah and his experience, as established by the following New Testament text. "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12.39,40)." If then, there was to be no sign given but that of Jonah, and Jonah could have done other than he did; specifically, had obeyed at once, rather than deviating as he did, there could be no sign for that evil and adulterous generation. There was to be no bag of assorted signs for the Lord to pull one out of; this was it. Jonah did obey, not as soon as we might have supposed, however, but in a manner consistent with the eternal

predestination of God that included the whole episode that led to a sign for the Saviour to speak of centuries later.

Returning then from our example of Jonah and the whale to our subject in Leviticus 25. The Israelites were to sow their fields, prune their vines, and gather the fruit for six years, but in the seventh year all this was to cease; it was to be a sabbath of rest for the land. God would provide an abundance in the six years sufficient for them and their cattle to subsist on in the seventh. This series of years was to be repeated for seven sabbaths of years. On the fiftieth year they would proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof (Leviticus 25.10). This was the jubilee sabbath.

We will not attempt to cover all the details of that sabbath and how they were to be carried out by the Israelites. We know from the Bible account that, like other arrangements God ordered for the twelve tribes, they in due course departed from the injunctions. What followed in the passing of time was a series of wars with the nations about them, bondage, famines, and other severe trials. Then the tribes divided shortly after the death of Solomon, ten to the North and two to the South. Idolatry abounded, and the stench of their sins stagnated the land. Where bounty was promised in the keeping of the sabbaths, poverty rather abounded. There were brief seasons of repentance and restoration, but the general direction of the tribes was always downward, further departing from the Lord. Finally, the captivities came; first for the Northern tribes, and then for those yet under the reign of the Kings of Judah in the South. The land was ravaged, the cities were sacked and destroyed, including the temple at Jerusalem, and the vast majority of the peoples were either slain or carried away to the lands of their distant enemies. The accounts of this period are vividly recorded in those books of the Bible we call the major prophets.

By now the limited Predestinarians will say that this disproves all we have been aiming at in this article. Not so, however, if one believes God had a plan and a wise purpose for those people above and beyond what only seemed to be a collapse of order with its attending chaos.

God is not on trial for having instructed those tribes to do what they may or may not obey. Neither could it be said He was taken by surprise by their lack of regard for His holy edicts. Who would dare say God did not know from all eternity how matters would fall out? It should be admitted by all that reverence the Bible that the Israelites did not escape the consequences of their actions, for the law of fleshly sowing and reaping is as inviolate as the laws of nature (Galatians 6.7,8). God did bring heavy retributions on His sinning people. The question then, is why did this occur as it did? Put another way, why did God not either give them grace to obey, or just force them to do His will? We say He did bring them to obey, but in His own way, and in His own good time consistent with His eternal predestination. Like the example used earlier of Jonah, the tribes had many lessons to be learned and their God would teach them well. These things were as well to be recorded for our learning today (Romans 15.4).

“Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jeremiah 25.8-11).” It should be clear that the King of Babylon, whom God called His servant, could not execute this judgment on the families of Israel had they not

violated the instructions given them. And, it would be preposterous to think Jehovah had to draw up such a plan after the fact. No; consistent with what we learn from every page of the Bible, God had a purpose worthy of Himself in all this being just as it was. The times of their servitude was fixed as well, being seventy years. No more, and no less.

This was not the only time God had pronounced this time of sore visitation on His nation. “For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place (Jeremiah 29.10).” Now it might be suggested by some that all God was telling them at that time was a result of His learning of their failings and He was thus responding to their wickedness with this punishment. To hold such a shallow notion of God is the same as saying, among other things, that what God does is contingent on what takes place in time. Is not God wiser than to be continually crossed by His creation? Has He not declared the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46.10)? We believe He has, and hope to say so, even if the tribes of conditionalism do cry us down as an antinomian or worse.

Let this matter not rest on our poor opinions, though. The revelation of God about this affair is quite clear to those that fear His name. “And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years (II Chronicles 36.20,21).” The three-score and ten years in II Chronicles 36.20,21 are the seventy years spoken of by the prophet in Jeremiah 25.11, and 29.10. This was the appointed time prescribed by God to rest the land by sabbath years as seen in the text at our heading, Leviticus 25.8. From this we can positively determine that, first, the land would enjoy its sabbaths, just as God had determined despite the failing on the part of the twelve tribes, and second, the period of time they did not observe them was a total of 490 years. How marvelous it is to see the directives of God carried out even when it would appear that failure was stamped on them all. God’s great predestination assured the fulfilling of every jot and tittle.

So we see that there was a fulfilling of the words that came from the mouth of Jeremiah, mentioned above, (Jeremiah 25.8-11; 29.10). Where did Jeremiah then get these words? Were they spoken at some impulsive moment by an over-zealous prophet? Were they the utterings of a man harboring ill will towards those that had done him numerous injustices? Let us see! “Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth (Jeremiah 1.8,9).” God declared that He put the words in the mouth of His prophet Jeremiah. Neither were these newly contrived words God delivered to Jeremiah’s mouth. No; they were the eternal verities suited for this very occasion. “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119.89).” “Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever (Psalm 119.152).” “Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever (Psalm 119.160).” Each of these three texts assure us that the words in the mouth of the prophet were of no timely origin.

Surely then the words spoken by the prophet Jeremiah concerning the seventy years captivity, words put in his mouth by God Himself, were as old as eternity. David knew this when he wrote the 119th Psalm. Jeremiah knew this, for God told him as much when he commissioned him from his mother’s womb. God’s little children know this too (Matthew 11.25). What limited Predestinarians know about this we leave for them to unravel.

From all this we must conclude that if the words of the captivity were forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119.89), just as Jeremiah prophesied them, then the captivity must as well have been certain, or he could not certainly speak of it. Consequently, the events that brought about the captivity must as well be certain (predestinated) or the words God sealed on the lips of the prophet would be meaningless and mere confusion. Our text in Leviticus 25.8 demands no more fulfillment than that of which was stated. But it does demand that much. The 490 years the Israelites desecrated those sabbaths would not make void the word of the Lord, for as Jeremiah prophesied, and as came to pass, the land did, at the appointed time, enjoy her sabbaths, though without the Israelites in occupancy. Every event necessary to cause this to come to pass was unfailingly in place by the irrevocable decrees of the Almighty. Surely when we see the grand story told in the Bible as a whole, and not as simple isolated events held together by “who knows what?” the doctrine of the absolute predestination of all things sweeps across the whole, binding it together in one uniform testimony of the grandeur and majesty of God, who sovereignly rules over His creation. That most definitely includes the substance of Leviticus 25.8.

There was, as we pointed out previously, seventy years after entering the land of promise before the sabbaths of land rest would begin. Then there was the Israelites occupying the land, attended with their neglect of the appointed sabbaths, followed by the captivity of seventy years to reclaim by God the rest for the land. Could all this exactness be mere chance? To us it speaks volumes about God’s predestination. When scripture after scripture blends together in a perfect harmony, and that, often spanning centuries, there can be no other conclusion drawn by those that trust God and His Word than the fact of all things being governed by a wise and holy plan far superior to our limited understanding. Indeed, God does reign supreme over all.

The Remnant

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Number 3

NUMBERS

“And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water: and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people: and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us, And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived (Numbers 21.4-9).”

In reviewing the book of Numbers for accounts of absolute predestination we have come to the wilderness wanderings of the twelve tribes of Israel. About 38 years of Israel’s wanderings are covered in the book of Numbers. During this time the tribes were often guilty of murmuring, complaining, rebellion, idolatry, adultery, and a whole host of other sins. All of this shameful conduct was recorded so that the children of God in this age might be instructed. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Romans 15.4).” We feel sure our text in Numbers 21.4-9 affords us a vivid example of this.

We doubt that anyone reading this account would deny that the Israelites' conduct was grave indeed. They spoke against God! They railed on Moses! Even worse, they accused Moses of trying to kill them in the wilderness. No question this was serious business. And, as if to emphasize their total disdain of the circumstances, they caustically conclude with, “...and our soul loatheth this light bread.” A search of the whole of the Bible would not turn up an incident of complete ingratitude to equal this episode. Was this then a time of total disobedience, free-will run amuck, and events fully outside the plan and purposes of God? Or, could it be yet another example of the wise government of God in leading His children through a series of trials and tribulations for their ultimate good, and His great glory? We are persuaded it is the latter. It is surely a complete disregard of the whole scope of the Word of God to reject the sovereign rule of Jehovah over events such as these. Arminian opinion might boast in “free agency to sin or serve” but it cannot be sustained by the record.

Four simple questions are in order in beginning our analysis of these texts: First, “Was God ever in control of the affairs of Israel?” Second, “Had God lost control of events in this uprising?” Third, “Had God surrendered control to the Israelites?” Or, fourth, “Was God still in control, despite the seeming chaos choking all decency and order from the Israelites?” If the answer to question one is “no,” then the next three questions are not necessary. If the answer is “yes,” then numbers two and three must be “no,” for number four to be “yes.” If the answer to question one is yes and the answer to question four is “no” then, we ask, what force or circumstance, power, or influence, brought God to be without control? If the mighty God of Israel was at one time in control of their affairs, then how could He possibly not, at some later period, still be in control? Can our unchangeable God change from One of

being in control to One of being without control? And all that without changing? God was in control, and all that transpired in this incident was in perfect harmony with His eternal plan to save His children from their sins.

There are two main areas of our text we hope to examine that we might show how all this was embraced in the absolute predestination of all things: the first is the wilderness wanderings, and the second is the brazen serpent.

THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

In order to show a pattern of rebellious conduct from the children of Israel while in the wilderness, we cite an example taken from the beginning of their journeys; an example very similar to our text at the heading. It will also show the necessity of absolute predestination to bring it to pass. “So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water (Exodus 15.22).” Thus began their sojourn of forty years from Egypt to the land of promise. This land in which they traveled is described as a wilderness eighty-four times, beginning from their crossing the Red Sea, to the time of circumcision after they had crossed Jordan (Joshua 5.6). Forty-five of those references to the wilderness are found in the book of Numbers alone. It is striking to see that at the very outset of their journey, after only three days march into the wilderness of Shur, they were confronted with sore trials. They had no water and the first they found, at Marah, was bitter. Again, after leaving Elim and coming into the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Sinai, they murmured against Moses and Aaron: “And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full: for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger (Exodus 16.3).” Clearly, these were a people given to bitterness and complaining. God, however, rather than serving up for them their worst expectations, and killing them there and then, served them bread from heaven (Exodus 16.4).

This bread the Lord served up to Israel in the wilderness was expounded on at length by Jesus, (John 6.22-59). “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6.35).” We shall not at this time attempt to give a full exposition of John 6 and the bread of life, as interesting as it might be, but rather confine ourselves to one main point only. Jesus, plainly as could be, gave His hearers a comparison of the bread in the wilderness with His body. Now we ask, had there been no necessity for bread in the wilderness, would there have been a comparison to be made? These Israelites must have been just where they were, under the exact circumstances they were under, and say and do just what they did, or there would be no need of bread from heaven for them. Had they not complained as they did it would not have been necessary for God in mercy to supply them as He did. Centuries later Jesus said by way of comparison, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven (John 6.51).” He did not come down from heaven to become bread; He was that bread when He came!

There was a long series of events that led up to the giving of bread in the wilderness, a few of which we shall list:

1. The birth of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;
2. The birth of the twelve sons of Jacob;
3. The selling of Joseph into Egypt;
4. The famine throughout the land;

5. The move of the families of Jacob to Egypt;
6. A new King in Egypt that knew not Joseph;
7. The bondage of the children of Israel;
8. The advent of Moses to deliver the Israelites;
9. The plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians;
10. The expulsion of Israel from Egypt;
11. The journey to the wilderness of Sin;
12. The murmuring of Israel.

Is there a sinner so hardened against the absolute predestination of all things that they cannot see that every link in this chain of events was necessary? Not one event, great or small, nothing we might call good or evil, could fail to come to pass, or there could be no bread from heaven for these murmurers. If this event (the murmuring) had by some manner failed to transpire, then what of the pronouncement of Jesus that He was the living bread which came down from heaven? We conclude that from all eternity Jesus was the bread from heaven, and from all eternity He purposed to compare His body to the bread in the wilderness. It cannot be imagined that the Lord would purpose this comparison and then have that which it was compared to fail to come to pass. No! The events that led to the promise of bread for these wilderness wanderers were as sure as Jesus was eternally the bread from heaven. Either everything was certain, or nothing could have been certain. It could not be both ways.

We are sure it will be countered by some few bombastic Arminians that the wilderness wanderings were a result of the failure of the children of Israel to obey God. We are certain the opposite is the truth. Their failure to obey was a direct result of their wilderness wanderings, not the reverse. We return to our text in Numbers 21.4-9 to explain.

“...and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way (verse 4).” What led the people to be discouraged? It was, according to the text, the way. Obviously it was not the way which they would have selected; this was the way the Lord had led them. “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jeremiah 10.23).” Poor sinners may never in this life fully know why the Lord leads them the way He does, but that He surely does direct their steps cannot be successfully controverted. “Man’s goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way (Proverbs 20.24)?” This was just as true when the Lord led His children into the wilderness by Moses as when Solomon recorded it centuries later. We are persuaded that man’s goings, all of them, are absolutely predestinated to be just as they come to pass; what else could “man’s goings are of the Lord” mean? “But surely, it does not include all this foul business the Israelites were guilty of in the wilderness” angry Limited Predestinarians will complain. Yes, that too! Probably as good a commentary as can be found on this subject is recorded in Psalm 107.

“They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distress. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation (Psalm 107.4-7).” These were the people God had redeemed from Egypt. All this had been prophesied for centuries, so it must have been God’s plan to so redeem them; thus it was His eternal purpose to do so. It was no accident they were wandering in a solitary way in the wilderness. God Himself led them there under Moses with strong evidences. “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way: and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people (Exodus

13.21,22).” Notice well the expression, to lead them the way. God Himself led them there. In their wanderings they became hungry and thirsty, just as we have shown from our text in Numbers 21. Remember, it was God who led them to this circumstance, thus it was for His wise and holy purpose for it to fall out as it did. As one dear Elder used to say so often when preaching the unsearchable riches of God, “It looks like this is going to lead us right straight into predestination.” And so it will.

“Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.” First, the Lord led them into the wilderness, and then the fainting souls cried unto Him. Predestinarians will, when blessed to see the great purpose of God in all things, thank and praise Him for every one of their wilderness trials, for it is there He makes bitter waters sweet; feeds them with bread from heaven, and delivers them from their distresses to feed on Jesus, the true and living bread. “And he led them forth by the right way.” Religionists may bellyache and deny the force of this text, yet it is blessedly plain to the poor of the flock that when God leads His sheep it is the right way. Even when the sheep are seemingly out of the way, yet they are still being led the right way.

In concluding our appraisal of the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel, we propose this question. If the Lord led them by the right way, from the first to the last, and since it was all foretold centuries earlier, and since it all came to pass as God said it would, then could it have been other than it was? And, was there ever a time with God that He had not purposed to bring His children just this way, the right way (Psalm 107.7)? Surely it could have been no afterthought with Him Who changes not. Finally, is there a rogue so bold as to say the all-wise God of heaven and earth did wrong in leading His people into the wilderness, and then keeping them there for 40 years? If it was not wrong for God to so deal with them, then it was right, and if right, it was always right, even from eternity; and that dear readers, is the absolute predestination of all things. Even then, before Paul declared it to the Romans, “...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8.28).”

THE BRAZEN SERPENT

“And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died (Numbers 21.6).” It is very clear from the following verses that not all the people that were bitten died, but much did. Had this been simply a sweeping judgment on the people as retribution for their sins then would they not all have died? But no; this, as all other afflictions the Lord sent on His children was more that just pure punishment for their murmuring. God was bringing His people along the right way, and as well providing instruction for us today. Incredible! you say? No; not at all, as the following clearly establishes: “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (I Corinthians 10.9-11).”

We emphasize two things from the above Scriptures; first, all these things happened to them for ensamples, or as examples. This was not just a series of random events that a self-willed people fell into. All, everything that took place, had a purpose, and that being they were examples to both themselves and to others. Some, like the non-elect today, were left to die in their sins, but others, comparable to His chosen ones now, had a remedy provided them. This, we are sure, is the major example set forth by this incident. Second, this was written for our admonition today, or as the text says, “upon whom the ends of the world are come.” He Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever,

eternally decreed all these things, and by His Spirit set them down in the Holy Scriptures for our admonition.

Now, if these Israelites had acted in some manner other than they did; if they paused, reflected, and turned from the desire to murmur, there would have been no need for the serpents of fire to bite them; hence, no ensample to record. But the Word of God tells us that, “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119.89).” Paul clearly told the Corinthians, and that by inspiration, that this was written for our admonition. This then was a portion of the Word of God that was forever settled in heaven! Could the episode with the serpents have failed to come to pass? Were not then the Israelites certain to do as they did? And again, if it was certain, was it not absolute predestination that made it certain? We know of nothing short of that which could possibly render things sure. We would remind the readers again that it will not do to suggest that this was only a case of God seeing what was going to happen and then acting in accordance. If God saw it, just as it was, and that from all eternity, then it was as certain as His perfect prescience.

“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people (Numbers 21.7).” There was no need for sanctimonious religionists to rush in and harangue the Israelites for their transgressions. God’s serpents did a sufficient job of both alarming them and bringing them to confess their sins. Their saying, “we have sinned” however, did not make them whole then any more than saying it today will. They needed Moses as an intercessor at that moment just as we need Jesus to intercede for us now. Moses did pray for the people as their mediator, and God was pleased to answer his prayer in their behalf. Unless one believes that prayer changes God’s mind they must acknowledge that Moses prayed for God’s will to be done. Now, to pray for God’s will is to pray for what God has from all eternity purposed to bring to pass. Moses surely had no notion of pleading for an interruption of the government of God as it concerned these poor bitten sinners. It must be certain that Moses, guided by the Spirit of intercession, approached the throne of grace appealing for the manifestation of what God had eternally decreed for the moment. Moses prayed for their salvation from the fiery serpents and the consequence of being bitten. This was no “time salvation” nor a “conditional salvation” Moses sought for his brethren. He prayed for the only kind of salvation the Bible speaks of. “...but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished (Isaiah 51.6).” A for ever salvation must be one that can be traced from eternity; one that has its rise in absolute predestination. God had for ever planned to save these people from the fiery serpents, so He must as well have for ever planned to send the serpents, and so the murmuring that necessitated the serpents must have been just as for ever certain.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live (Numbers 21.8).” As we mentioned earlier, some of those bitten had already died, thus we conclude there was no salvation from the serpents provided for them in the eternal plan. To say otherwise is to deprecate the wisdom of God in providing for His children from the foundation of the world. But, blessed be the name of the Lord, provision was provided for some of the bitten, just as there is now provision for God’s elect from sin. Was the remedy to rescue the bitten simply an afterthought with God? Did God react to their actions, or was there a plan of provision already in place for those that cried to Moses for relief? We say there was a plan; and it was drawn up from eternity, making both the cause (murmuring) and the effect (the brazen serpent) equally certain. To say it as clear as possible, this account recorded in Numbers 21 was fully predestinated from eternity.

“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 3.14,15).” There are several facts contained in the above verses that lead us to believe that absolute predestination is the sure fountain from whence all these events flowed. First, Moses lifted up his brazen serpent under the direct command of God as a remedy for those that looked and lived. Even so, was Jesus lifted up. Second, Jesus was, according to the Word of God, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13.8).” Before the world was framed the Lamb was certain to be lifted up; a position none but rank Arminians deny. Third, when Jesus drew a figure of His sufferings and death for believers from the lifted up brazen serpent, it established the episode in Numbers 21 as a certainty of equal antiquity with the eternal decree of His own lifting up on the cross. Who could, with baseless abandon, accuse the Lord of looking about for a suitable figure to employ during His earthly ministry? No! with unerring accuracy, He Who set the world in motion with the Word of His power employed an illustration that was as certain as the cross itself. Both events, the lifting up of the brazen serpent, and the lifting up of Jesus, compliment one another as well as the decrees of God. Without attempting to further multiply proofs, we assert with much thanksgiving for the truth of the matter, the absolute predestination of all those things involved in Numbers 21.4-9.

The Remnant

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DEUTERONOMY

“And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter (Deuteronomy 3.23-26).”

Moses, that great and noble servant of the Lord God, was drawing to the end of his long and illustrious sojourn in this life. There are few characters in the Bible more interesting when studied than Moses. From his birth right down to the events of this text, his life was amazing. As an infant he was wondrously delivered from Pharaoh’s death sentence. All the male Hebrew children were under it. His parents had first hidden him, hoping he might be spared. Then they placed him in an ark, setting him loose in the river, a figure of being in Christ, even in the midst of peril. Human reasoning would have placed his prospects for survival at slim to none. But, of all people, the very daughter of Pharaoh rescued him, taking him for her own son. Blinded free-willers might suggest this was pure chance; a mere stroke of luck. We are persuaded, and that overwhelmingly, that the predestination of God was forging this chain of events that brought Moses from the dreadful waters to a lofty position next to the very throne of Egypt and then finally to lead the children of Israel to the land of promise.

Our persuasions, however, will not prove anything. Nor do we really want to prove this, or anything else, to our readers. Our aim, if blessed and guided by God, is to set forth the facts of His Word, and leave it there. We shall, accordingly, divide our text under three headings; first, God’s revelation to Moses; second, the prayer of Moses; and third, God’s answer. We hope to show in each division the wonders of predestination thoroughly and throughout.

GOD’S REVELATION

“Moses was then an hundred and twenty years old. His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated (Deuteronomy 34.7).” Learned in all the wisdom of Egypt he nevertheless had not sufficient eye-sight, nor physical power, to appropriate an understanding of the greatness of God. This great leader of Israel meekly served those many years with less understanding of his heavenly King than he did the king of Egypt. “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7.22).” Notice that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt. What boundless depth of understanding this great man possessed! Egypt founded the first national government. As Moses rose to prominence in Egypt his understanding of its laws, workings, and system was no doubt spectacular. The Egyptians were masters of astronomy and geography. Moses learned all they knew. They were undisputed geniuses in architecture and construction, witnessed to by the Pyramids. Moses became their equal. Their ability to write in hieroglyphic form displayed an advanced grasp of geometry; thus they possessed a depth of learning in mathematics. Moses advanced to their highest attainments in this achievement as well. The Egyptians were prolific in the sciences, arts, crafts, medicine, engineering, jewel making, and varied other industries. Moses was learned in all this wisdom also. Simply put, the

Egyptians were highly learned and skillful in a multitude of areas. And Moses grasped fully all the learning they ever knew.

Moses saw and comprehended all the greatness of Egypt. Why then did God prolong to this late hour in the life of His servant Moses to begin showing him His greatness? Moses had previously seen many vivid displays of God's greatness, such as the burning bush, the plagues on Egypt, the parting of the sea with the destruction of Israel's enemies. Would not that at least have been a start of showing him His greatness? No, it would not. To illustrate: there might have been a mountain goat or a jack-rabbit looking on when Moses approached the bush that burned with fire. Would their ocular appropriation of that event lead them to any appreciation of the greatness of God? Did the various plagues inflicted on the subjects of Pharaoh soften a single heart to even partially learn of God's greatness? We are persuaded by all we know that the answer is no! So Moses, despite his extensive grasp of all Egypt's wisdom, could not, by that worldly learning, be taught of God's greatness. "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness (I Corinthians 3.18,19)." Despite his lofty attainments, Moses was, in himself, no better at comprehending the greatness of God than was the lowliest hod carrier in Egypt.

God forbid that we should slander Moses, or deprecate his abilities. It is our aim to relate why God did not, until late in the life of this eminent man, begin to show him His greatness.

We might assign many opinions, some with good foundation, as to why the Lord did not begin to show His greatness to Moses until the end of his distinguished life. We feel sure the Bible can give us the surest reason, however. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Ecclesiastes 3.1)." Surely the delay in God showing Moses His greatness was one of the every thing in this text. The reason for the delay? It was not yet the season or the time! Had God shown him His greatness prior to when He did, it would have been out of season and untimely; a situation unthinkable with God. And displayed with unmistakable clarity in Ecclesiastes 3.1 is the word, purpose. There is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Yes, indeed; the season and time for Moses to learn of the greatness of God had been purposed; not by Moses, but by God Himself. And, what is the purpose of God but predestination, and if predestinated, then absolutely predestinated.

By analytical observation we see then: at one season and time Moses did not see God's greatness. At another season Moses did see God's greatness. We learn from Solomon (Ecclesiastes 3.1) that these seasons of knowing and not knowing were by purpose. We know that what God speaks or purposes He will bring to pass (Isaiah 46.11). What God brings to pass in time was ordered, willed, and decreed in eternity. Those of us not ashamed of the Holy purposes of God call this predestination. Predestination, as a word, can surely stand alone without an adjective to support it, but for the sake of identification, we call this predestination absolute, as opposed to the Arminian idiocy of limited predestination. Thus God's revelation of His greatness to Moses was timely, and in season. For reasons left secret to God, His servant Moses did not need to know of God's greatness until the end of his long and fruitful journey. Any further speculation or conjecture on our part we consider profitless, and certainly not necessary.

THE PRAYER OF MOSES

"I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon (Deuteronomy 3.25)." Yes, Moses knew the promises of God. Israel would soon be

transported into that land which God had given them for an inheritance. Deliverance had come; the land of rest was soon to be their home. But what of Moses, that well-taught scholar of Egypt's learning? "Let me go over" was his prayer. It was not to be, however!

The reason it was not to be, from an observable standpoint, was because Moses had not followed the directives of God at the waters of Meribah. "Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink (Numbers 20.8ff)." The conduct Moses displayed on that occasion was less than seemly for a person of his station; for example: "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock (Numbers 20.10)?" Beside calling his brethren rebels, and assuming for himself and Aaron ability to get water from the rock, Moses smote the rock; not once only, but twice, as if for good measure. God had given him clear instructions; he was to speak to the rock. But twice he smote it with the rod, in seeming defiance of God Himself.

What made this conduct of Moses even all the more aggravating was that the rock he smote was a theophanic manifestation of Christ. "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ (I Corinthians 10.4)." The marvel of it all is, though, that this is not why God refused the prayer of Moses for entrance into the land of promise.

"They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips (Psalms 106.32,33)." "He spake unadvisedly!" It was what Moses said, not what he did, that was the action for which God denied him entrance into the land. In a way, and for God's good purpose, the smiting of the rock twice set forth in a figure the smiting of God's only begotten Son. It was his speaking, however, that sealed his journey's end in the wilderness short of the land of promise. Thus he prayed for a reprieve from the sentence upon him.

"I pray thee, let me go over." It would be a begging at the issue to contend that this was not a real prayer Moses uttered. No! Never! This was as real and proper a prayer as any child of the heavenly King ever prayed. No doubt but Moses truly felt there could be some measure of relief for him since God had then begun to show him His greatness. "Perhaps God will yet show mercy" seems to adequately portray the feeling of this noble servant of God.

We come now to the matter of predestination. If we admit that this prayer of Moses was a real prayer, that he was given utterance by the Spirit of God, and that God heard his prayer, which the record clearly shows He did, then it must have been included in the eternal will of God which embraces all things. Now Moses could not have even thought to pray in this regard but for the previous message from God that he could not go over to the land of promise. Otherwise, the prayer would have been useless, having no foundation for its being offered up. This leads us to the unmistakable conclusion that Moses also must have spoken unadvisedly when he was instructed by God to bring forth water from the rock. Otherwise he could not at this time pray for deliverance from God's penalty upon him. No transgression; no prayer for deliverance.

Red-hot free-willers might say we are attempting to lead our readers in circles with unfounded deductions, but that is not the case at all. Is it unfounded to say God has declared the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46.10)? To get to the end of anything, all in between must be traversed. Surely the

transgression and prayer of Moses falls somewhere in between the beginning and the end which God has from eternity declared. But, let us confine ourselves to only one text, which is vastly sufficient to establish the proposition that the prayer of Moses was predestinated. “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear (Isaiah 65.24).” Yes, then, the eternal God had an answer for Moses before he ever prayed! What else can, before they call, I will answer, mean? How long before Moses prayed did God answer him? Five minutes? A day? Forty years? God, Who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, always had answered Moses. Dare we suppose then that Moses might not have transgressed, and might not have prayed? Whatever would our all-wise God have done with the answer had Moses failed to pray? The answer is clear as the noon-day sun to those that worship an all-wise God. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord (Proverbs 16.33).”

GOD’S ANSWER

“But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter (Deuteronomy 3.26).” There is much of value in the expression “But the Lord Was wroth with me for your sakes” but We shall pass that by with only this comment: Moses would be sacrificed for the benefit of Israel. That which commands our attention at this time Is the answer of God to the prayer of Moses.

“Let it suffice thee.” If we have any understanding at all of the clear language of God, He was instructing Moses to be satisfied with matters as they were, for they would not change. That was the way things were going to be, and further pleading was prohibited. Moses had thus seen another display of God’s greatness, this time in answer to his prayer. “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast (Psalm 33.9).” It need not be doubted that Moses was reconciled in this matter; he never brought the issue up again, and, in fact, proceeded with the business God gave him regarding the transition of leadership to Joshua. Moses had prayed; the Lord had answered.

Contained in the answer of God to Moses is certain evidence that predestination was involved, Consider if you will, the brief, yet awesome, expression from God to Moses: “Let It suffice thee,” Besides the brevity, and we say forcefulness, of the answer there are two extremely important words contained therein; the first being it. “Let it suffice thee.” If we are not totally mistaken the word it refers back to Moses acknowledging that God had begun to show him His greatness and His mighty hand (verse 24). God, in His infinite and eternal wisdom, saw fit to begin showing Moses His greatness, and what He began to show him did not include crossing Jordan with Israel. Surely it cannot be believed that God would have entertained a change of mind. His purposes towards Moses remained the same. He was of one mind!

“But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? [Not even the great Moses.] and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him (Job 23.13,14).” Poor wretched Job; in all his afflictions his grief-plagued soul could still rise higher than any unhumbled Arminian that ever lived. He could contemplate the eternal decrees and appointments of God, even in his darkest hour. Affliction and sorrows could not seal this truth from his heart. The flowing tears failed to blind him from a view of the immutable purposes of his God that he called appointments. And bless his soul, Job said there were many of them; appointments, that is.

One of those appointments was the it God told Moses to be sufficed with. It was an appointment, and thus done forever; that is, from everlasting, and not on the spur of the moment, after the manner in which men act.

Solomon was of this same persuasion when he penned the following: “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him (Ecclesiastes 3. 14t).” “So, Moses,” God is saying, “Let it suffice thee; this appointment is eternal. It cannot, nor shall be changed. It cannot be added to, nor taken from. Let it suffice thee.” Yes, “God requireth that which is past (Ecclesiastes 3.15).” Simply put, God was requiring Moses to be satisfied with His eternal predestination for him to die on the wilderness side of Jordan.

The other word of importance we mentioned in God’s answer to Moses is suffice. “Let it suffice thee.” What God had ordered from all eternity was sufficient. God’s appointment was all Moses needed, and all he was to rest in. Sufficiency with God needs no additions, and knows of no diminishing.

Centuries later the apostle Paul learned this pleasurable lesson. Paul had been given a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me (II Corinthians 12.8).” We affirmed previously that Moses had prayed for what God was not pleased to grant him, and that it was a real and proper prayer. Just so with Paul, he was praying for relief which was not to come. The notion that Paul’s prayer was not a real and proper prayer is as absurd as the idea that Moses was not in the Spirit when he prayed. How did God answer Paul? Precisely as he had answered Moses! “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (II Corinthians 12.9).” What a blessed answer. God also tells Paul, “Let it suffice thee.”

Often truths concealed in the Old Testament are fully revealed in the New Testament. But they are truths nevertheless. God was gracious to Moses just as He was gracious to Paul even though the word, grace, was not used. And it was sufficient grace. When God suffices His children it always flows from eternal wisdom. God apparently did not explain to Moses that this sufficiency was all of pure, free, eternal grace, but you may be sure it was the same eternal grace that Paul received in his distress. Is there a heart so steeled against the purposes and eternal will of God that they could deny that in both these cases, that of Paul and Moses alike, “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past (Ecclesiastes 3.15)”? We envy them not.

Moses and Paul alike had that which God deemed needful; sufficient grace. Grace flows from God as does all His other glorious attributes, such as love, mercy, pity, or even wrath. They are all as eternal as God Himself. They are that which has been and are now. They are that which hath already been and is to be. They are required for they are past. They are past, present, and future with God, for they are NOW. The great I AM had spoken as He had thought, and it stood fast; fast as the everlasting hills. Be it His great will, counsel, decrees, or predestination, it all remains the same. Certainty is stamped on them all. We are content that there never was a time with God that He would not suffice Moses when he prayed. And not a moment before, or a moment after, the appointed season and time for grace to be his sufficiency.

Moses, like Paul, had his supplication denied. His request was, based on the content, denied. However, in both cases these great servants of the Most High gained more by losing than if they had won. The

power of Christ rested on Paul in such a fashion that he could rather glory in his thorn than further complain. And as for Moses, that figure of the law, he was blessed to be laid to rest by God Himself in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor (Deuteronomy 34.6). No one but God ever knew where he was buried, though apparently Satan would have moved mountains to find the location (Jude 9).

Wherein then does the great blessing to Moses lie in all this? “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1.21).” We would join with the poet in saying: “To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing.” The work of Moses, a figure of the law, was done. The predestinated time for Moses to depart was at hand. He would be gathered home to his eternal rest, there to everlastingly bask in the full glory of that grace which was his sufficiency in this world. If the death of a child of God, in this case, Moses, is not a great blessing to him, we are at a total loss to know what blessings are really all about.

Had Moses been able to change God’s mind, an unthinkable proposition, and be left with Israel a little longer, God would have had to also revise all His other plans relative to Israel going to the land of promise. For our part we had rather rest in the sweet doctrine of God’s absolute predestination than try to sort out all the confusion involved with any other process.

The Remnant

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JOSHUA

“Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses (Joshua 11.18-20).”

Predestination – a glorious theme to those little children that have been led of the Holy Spirit of God to see their deep depravity; their need of help from a source outside of themselves. These all love predestination because it is the only theme that will comfort them as they look to Jesus in their spiritual poverty. But, we write not of the limited predestination hawked about by the truth’s secret enemies. That counterfeit predestination is nothing better than a fiery dart from Satan. The tried and afflicted saints find themselves humbly bowing before the Sovereign Ruler of the universe whom they trust has absolutely predestinated all things – all things without exception. This absolute predestination includes the upheaval of the trembling mountains, (Deuteronomy 4.11f; Judges 5.5). It embraces the roaring waves (Matthew 8.26), and the troubled seas (Psalm 107.24ff), and guides with eternal exactness the fierce winds of the most calamitous storms (Job 1.19). It also, with the precision of the everlasting decrees, directs the lives, conduct, and death of potentates, rulers and kings. To these kings and their adventures we direct our attention.

If God would so enable us, we shall inquire of the Word of God concerning some of these kings in general, and those Joshua made war with in particular. If we do not establish that all these events regarding the wars between Joshua and the kings were not absolutely predestinated, it surely will not be because predestination was not involved, but rather because of our inability or lack of grace to do so.

“Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.” From Joshua 12.7 through verse 24 there is a complete list of all the kings that Israel subdued under the leadership of Joshua; 31 in all. No more! No less! From the king of Jericho to the king of Tirzah, all of them are listed. This was war on a major scale by any method of measurement, and it was war that God had clearly assured Joshua success in, as can partially be seen from the following: “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee (Joshua 1.5).” One may ask, “Why would God purpose the complete destruction of all these kings and their forces? Are we not alike all sinners?” Hear the Word of the Lord: “And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else (Deuteronomy 4.37-39).”

There are several basic reasons contained in the above text that shows as clear as the noon-day sun why God favored Israel and destroyed the heathen kings and their subjects. First, He loved their fathers and not the kings of Canaan. Second, He chose their seed and not the seed of the 31 kings. Third, God would bring His chosen to, and give them for an inheritance, the land occupied by the heathen kings.

Fourth, He is God in heaven above. Fifth, He is God on earth beneath. Sixth, there is none else. Seventh, we may add, with much Bible proof, that it all seemed good in His sight (Matthew 11.26). Eighth, there is none that dare repleist against God, or say, “Why hast thou made me thus (Romans 9.20)?”

Before directing specific attention to the 31 kings Joshua made war with, we will show from various other incidents and texts how God has dealt with the kings of the earth as distinguished from, and for the ultimate glory of, the King of kings at the consummation of all things.

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will (Proverbs 21.1).” We envy not the sinners so hardened against the sovereign predestination of God that they would dare quarrel with the force of this text. The majesty of God’s universal government over the kings of the earth is stamped vividly upon every word of the text. The heart of the king, that seat of all affections, good and evil, is as secure in the hand of God as the foundations of the world. Does the heart of the king turn to the left, or to the right? As God turns the rivers of waters, so to the left or the right He turns the heart of the king. There are no exceptions to this rule that we can see, and we are fully persuaded no one else can either. Does the king, any king, like Pharaoh, turn his heart from mercy towards the saints of God? As sure as God turns the rivers of water, he turned the heart of the Egyptian king against Israel. Did king Cyrus think in his heart to build up Jerusalem? He was but God’s shepherd and would perform all His pleasure (Isaiah 44.28), for his heart was in the hand of God.

KING AHASUERUS

Centuries ago there was a king, Ahasuerus by name, “...which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces (Esther 1.1).” God, by name, is not mentioned in the book of Esther, but His supreme rule over this king, and all events that transpired, was as much in evidence as if the book had been written by Paul or John. “On that night [a certain night] could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him (Esther 6.1-3).”

There are several profound items contained herein. The very evening that the wicked Haman would come to the king seeking approval to destroy Mordecai, the king could not sleep. What wondrous providence! Had the king enjoyed his usual rest certainly Haman would have gained the heart of the king to put to death this servant of God; but no! the king could not sleep! His heart, being in the hand of the Lord, was made restless and he sought to occupy his time of fretfulness with what? Bone-dry books of the chronicles, or records of the king’s domain. And where did the eyes of the servants light to read? On the account of Mordecai informing the king of a plot against his life. Was this Mordecai’s lucky moment? Did the servants chance upon this recorded event? We leave the answer to those two questions to the limited predestinarians for their consternation. Even more amazing was the fact that the deed had gone unrewarded until that moment. Surely God was guiding these events, as well as the heart of the king, to deliver Mordecai from the evil plot of Haman. Haman may have sought to gain the ear of the king, but the heart of the king was securely in the hand of the Lord.

Yet another amazing twist to this episode was the timing of Haman’s entrance before the king. Haman’s entrance, like all the other events of the evening, came together at the appointed moment in God’s

eternal decrees to raise the outcome above any speculation regarding chance. Everything fell out with the same unerring accuracy as did the creation of the universe. Nothing came early nor arrived late.

Haman thought in his heart that the king would delight to do honour to him and thus he recommended a lavish display of honours be conferred on the one whom the king delighted to honour. Thus Mordecai was both exalted and delivered at once, and Haman hastened to his house mourning and having his head covered (Esther 6.12). For centuries now, those that have no confidence in the flesh see the predestination of all things illuminating these events.

KING AHAB

Another king, named Ahab, thought in his heart to avoid considerable danger in battle when he went up to Ramoth-gilead to make war with the king of Syria. His plot was cunning and conceived to put king Jehoshaphat at the risk rather than himself. "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle (II Chronicles 18.29)." The king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots to fight not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel. Thus when the battle drew on they spied Jehoshaphat and believed him to be their prey. Soon they had compassed him about, but he cried out, "and the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him (III Chronicles 18.31)." The following is one of the most amazing accounts of the predestination of God to be found in the Bible: "And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded (II Chronicles 18.33)." About the time of the sun going down he died.

All three kings, the king of Israel, the king of Syria, and the king of Judah, did that which seemed right in their own eyes, but the decrees of God would be executed nevertheless. Ahab's heart was fully evil and selfish, yet as the rivers of water, God turned it to his destruction. The king of Syria thought in his heart to single out the king of Israel in the battle, but the plan of his heart was also frustrated. God delivered Ahab from the scheme of the king of Syria so that a venturesome arrow might strike this wicked king. King Jehoshaphat, fully duped, and thinking no doubt to magnify himself in the battle, found his robes of glory to be little more than a bull's-eye. Thus God turned his heart to cry to Him and he was spared. Might we not say then that all three kings' hearts were in the hand of the Lord? Again, we observe the predestination of God ruling in affairs that seemed well contrived by these three kings.

KING OG

While Israel still journeyed in the wilderness they encountered another of these kings whose heart was in the hand of the Lord. "And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei. And the Lord said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land (Numbers 21.33-35)." Here came a king, hot to do battle with the rag-tag looking band of sojourners. Doubt not that he thought he would get the victory; otherwise he would have supplicated for peace. But no; to battle he must go, for God had delivered him into the hand of Moses. Israel was completely victorious. King Og and all his bloodthirsty host were routed and put to the sword, "...until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land (verse 35)." Would any presumptuous Arminian dare to

suggest that Moses and his army “some how got out of control” and exterminated these innocent folks? The obvious conclusion is that God purposed the death of Og and all his host, otherwise He would not have delivered them to Moses in the first place. Simply put, it was their time to die, the way was also certain, and die they did. So then, we ask, did God get this plan up “all of a sudden” or was it included in His eternal plan? From all eternity He must have known the outcome, and yet he led Og straight into the slaughter. Thus, we see certainty stamped upon the whole; and that translates to absolute predestination if there is any meaning at all to the entire event.

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Daniel was brought before king Nebuchadnezzar. The king dreamed dreams, “...wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him (Daniel 2.1).” The whole business so troubled the king that he sought the magicians and astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to unfold this disturbing vision to him. After these frauds and Satan’s handservants gave the king a thorough run-around he was so “angry and very furious,” (verse 12) with them all that he commanded to destroy all the wise men of his kingdom, which command also included Daniel.

Daniel desired of the king time and he would shew the king the interpretation of his dream. Daniel then went to his house and made the matter known to his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah that they would desire the mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret (verse 18). “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him (Daniel 2.19-22).” Thus Daniel revealed to the king his dream and was spared, along with his three companions. It is clear that the king could not recall his dream, neither could his swarm of religious diviners reveal it either. But God knew it, else how could He reveal it to Daniel to render to the king his interpretation? God is infinite in wisdom and knowledge. Some call it the omniscience of God. Whatever it is called, God, from all eternity, knew the dream and spared Daniel with the revelation of the dream. We ask: did God know it because the king was going to dream it, or did the king dream it because God not only knew it, but predestinated it to come to pass?

Let us suppose for a moment. If God knew the dream, did not He always know it? And, did not God always know that Daniel would be saved from destruction by the revealing of the same dream? Now suppose that the king slept like a baby that night and did not have the dream. None of this would ever have happened then, you say? Then did God really know it from eternity or not, if it might not happen? “Oh,” you say, “it had to happen, but it was not predestinated; it just happened.” Then what caused it to had to happen if not predestination; chance? If it had to happen, then it was as certain as God, in His infinite wisdom, had always known it.

To put the matter in clearer New Testament light, we look to the words of the Apostles: “And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy

counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4.24-28).” These humble disciples, unlike the arrogant free-willers of today, believed that God had made all, and all that was in all besides. They quoted David, (Psalm 2) regarding the unification of rulers and kings against the holy child Jesus. But, amazing at it may seem to the limited predestinarians and assorted other Armiians, these disciples saw that all the unifications and federations of kings and rulers was but God’s hand displaying His determinate counsel. It was also a counsel determined before to be done. We may safely conclude, the kings did what God had predestinated, absolutely, and from all eternity.

KING HEROD

Of all the kings that ever pestered the Jews, no king was more depraved than Herod, with the possible exception of king Ahab. Herod was a half-breed. His father was an Idumaeon, a descendant from Edom, or Esau, and his mother was reputedly an Arabian. Coming then from such despised stock it was no wonder that his passions knew no bounds. When it was announced by the wise men from the East that the Christ child had been born, Herod requested of them that they bring word to him of this matter. The wise men had described the baby Jesus as “he that is born King of the Jews, (Matthew 2.2).” The Lord had other plans for the distant travelers, however, as can be seen in the following: “And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way (Matthew 2.12).” If a Conditionalist ever took time to give this business any thought he might find far too much predestination herein to suit him. Word from king Herod certainly must have carried some weight with the wise men -until word from the King of Kings came to each of them in the dream. The construction of the text requires that we understand that each of them had the same dream. Is that a world-class coincidence; or was it the work of God? And, could it possibly be imagined that the meeting between the wise men and Herod caught God without a plan? No; not at all. God had from all eternity determined to bring every participant in this episode together at the precise moment to do exactly as each of them did. We believe we can establish this assertion from the Word of God, and in so doing also establish that it was all predestinated. For example, Joseph also dreamed. The angel of the Lord warned Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and the Christ-child, “...for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him (Matthew 2.13).” We may fairly ask, how did God know that unless it was so? And, was not the heart of Herod in the hand of the Lord, just like the heart of all other kings? Do not these things all become to us a perfect series of events, absolutely predestinated to come to pass, and so working together for good to those that love the universal government of God?

When Herod saw that he was mocked of the wise men he was exceeding wrath, and so had all the children of Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, slain, from two years old and under (Matthew 2.16). There can be no mistaking here that the awful deed of Herod was just another barbaric act of a depraved heart. What king Herod did was as certain to transpire as certainty can be, as is established by the following Scriptures: “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not (Matthew 2.17,18).” Unless one can prove that what Jeremiah had prophesied was merely speculation, or a shrewd guess by God in telling him to say it, then it must have been certain to transpire. Again, the question arises, how did God know it unless it was to be just as he knew it? How, too, could such an event possibly be predicted centuries before unless the unerring hand of God governed the whole? Is it not clear that this king, like all other kings, was being directed by Him Who held his heart in His hand?

JOSHUA AND THE KINGS

Having now seen a clear and definite pattern of how God has absolutely ruled the rulers and kings throughout the Scriptures, we will briefly consider the warfare between Israel, led by Joshua, and the citizens of Canaan, led by their various kings.

Joshua was no king; nor were there to be any kings among Israel for years to come. Israel was governed solely by God. What governmental, spiritual, or military practices they employed were all given them by the Lord of hosts. Though they were a sizable people in number they were by God described as few. “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deuteronomy 7.6-8).” Thus this fewest of all people came up from the wilderness and begun to wage a protracted war against all the mighty kings and nations in the land the Lord had given them for an inheritance. There in Canaan the Israelites were to drive out all its previous occupants that they might subdue the land as well as its inhabitants.

There was a good and proper reason for the warfare Joshua conducted against those heathen kings. He and the Israelites had been instructed to do so. “But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 20.16-18).” We would emphasize two points from this text. The first is God was telling the Israelites exactly what would take place. He told them what could only be described as His eternal plan for them on entering the land. Could that be anything less than predestination? If it was not His predestinated plan then how could He tell them with any certainty of these coming conflicts? The enemies of truth will respond, as they usually do, that God foreknew all this business, but He did not predestinate it. We suppose, on that basis, that God was in possession of knowledge that may be no knowledge at all; He only knew it if it came to pass, and if it did not then He didn’t know it; He only thought He did. If that idea is not on the outer limits of ignorance we cannot say to what idiocy sinners may run to that they may deny the plain truth.

The second item from Deuteronomy 20 is the purpose of God to work all this for good to the children of Israel. God would have Israel remove by warfare all these wicked heathens that could only contaminate their behavior should they be permitted to co-exist. How fully beautiful to contemplate such a grand theme. God had from all eternity laid the blueprint, if we may use such a comparison, to deliver His chosen, and destroy the heathen. We can only bow in amazement that we have hope of being among His chosen today. If our hope is real, and from God, we may as well expect many spiritual battles just as Israel of old endured. But, may our Lord be praised, the battle is not ours but the Lord’s. “And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s (II Chronicles 20.15).”

Returning to our text at the heading we see that “...it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly (Joshua 11.20).” Profound, yes, and fearful too, that it is stated that the hardening of the kings hearts was of the Lord. There is no room here to say that God allowed this to happen, or that He suffered it to be so. No; it says it was of the Lord. Their heart was in His hand and He hardened it. Not a king escaped this sovereign act. All 31 came in battle against Joshua and Israel, and each in succession was destroyed without favor or pity. It was of the Lord.

We would mention that there were a number of other kings that Joshua smote on the other side of Jordan besides the 31 kings on the west. Be assured their sad fate rested in the same hand as all the other kings; the hand of the Lord. We might run on and on asserting the certainty of all this, but we feel there is more than enough evidence to show the predestination of God throughout. Should this be thought a hard and hateful doctrine to some, let it be known that there have been those through the centuries that are also fearful of holding to that which would seem to blemish the Name of God, who nevertheless love the sweet certainty that God rules all, absolutely and eternally.

The Remnant

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Number 6

THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL

“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 21.25).”

PREFATORIAL REMARKS.

A gifted servant of the Lord many years ago said, “There is no medium between absolute predestination and absolute atheism.” We agree. There are really only two schools of serious thought on predestination. There are those that absolutely believe it, and there are those that absolutely do not. All other views range somewhere in between the two and are compromises, or corruptions of the two positions, and are not worthy of serious consideration at this time.

The Old School, Primitive Baptists do absolutely believe in predestination. We have a number of vociferous enemies, however, that absolutely do not believe in predestination. They claim to hold to the doctrine, but what they have really done is re-name the doctrine of election. They call it predestination. God predestinated people, not events” is the foundation of their arguments. Their saying so, however, will not make it so, no matter how often they say it.

Lest anyone think we have not understood these deniers of predestination correctly, we offer a sample of their corruption of the word, “predestination,” as published in a leading Conditional paper for October, 1995. The title of the article was fittingly misnamed, “The Bible Doctrine of Predestination.”

Predestination is unto salvation not unto damnation. Where is it taught that God has predestinated anyone to hell? Or that He has predestinated all things good and evil that comes to pass? Where is that taught in any of these passages? They simply are not.

Before the world began, God chose (elected) a people to what? To be finally housed with Him in heaven. Here is a breakdown of the word so we can easily remember:

PRE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	DESTINATION
(tells you when)												(tells you where)
Before the foundation of the world.												Heaven and immortal glory.

We shall not waste time with a thorough examination of this perversion of both language and doctrine. Notice the author’s erroneous interchanging the words, “election” and “predestination.” His assertion was, “God has elected a people.” His supposed proof? “Here is a breakdown of the word so we can easily remember: PRE ----- DESTINATION.”

Thus, we see that these compromisers are simply interchanging the words, “predestination” and election,” and falsely assuming them to be one and the same. The difference between election and predestination is plain to believers.

Much emphasis has also been put on the supposed notion that the word “predestination” is not found in the Bible, and that predestinate and predestinated are used only a combined four times. True enough,

the word “predestination” has not been used in that form in the King James Version of the Bible, but does it then follow that the doctrine of predestination is not there? Certainly not! We contend, not for the words in particular, but for the blessed truths set forth in the Word of God that mean exactly the same things as the words themselves. There are many texts in the Scriptures where words are used to teach the doctrine of predestination, even though the specific word “predestination” is not used. Does it nullify the doctrine of predestination simply because the word, “predestination” is not used? We question if any would boldly go before God in prayer to inform Him there is no doctrine of predestination since they could not find the word in that form in the Bible, unless they are rank, unhumbled Arminians with seared consciences.

Paul wrote Timothy, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand (II Timothy 4.6).” We have never heard of anyone that did not understand what the apostle meant. He spoke of dying. But, if we used the reasoning Conditionalists employ against predestination, that if the specific word is not there, then the doctrine must not be there, we might as well believe Paul said he was to be made a blood sacrifice, and that he was leaving town on a train. The Spirit of truth inspired Paul to use the words, “offered” and “departure.” By Conditionalist reasoning the two words cannot mean death, for the word, “death” was not used. That is what they also say about predestination. They make a fuss over the absence of the word.

There are several aspects regarding the doctrine of predestination that we must mention briefly, even though they have been mentioned often in the pages of The Remnant. First, there is a doctrine in the Bible very properly called predestination, no matter what name is used in the Scriptures to identify it. Second, predestination and the knowledge of God, that complete knowledge of all things He possesses from eternity, embrace the same things. What God knew in eternity was, at that time, certain, or it could not have been certainly known. For His knowledge to be certain all things were decreed, willed, ordained, purposed, foreordained, predestinated, or acted upon with something from God of equal force, to be certain. What else is there, other than predestination, or its equivalent, that makes future events certain? To our minds, none but fools deny the weight of the argument. Neither will it pass muster to say that God willed to permit the good and the evil He saw would take place in time. “Willed to permit” is the equivalent of decreeing or predestinating the same, for if the will of God is exercised in the matter it cannot be unwilled by man, beasts, or devils. Nor can it be said He simply permitted some things to take place. God, infinite in wisdom, either willed to permit or He was unwilling to permit; thus we go full circle to predestination again, for if God was unwilling to permit certain events, then no power in creation could bring them to pass contrary to His unwillingness. If He was willing, it was the same as predestination. We would be obliged to those that contend on the one hand that predestination is not in the Bible, and on the other hand that in eternity God permitted some things to transpire, but He was not willing to predestinate the same, to give us a few passages of Scripture where all this “permit” business may be found. (We are acquainted with I Corinthians 16.7, and Hebrews 6.3, and would note that the usage of the word “permit” there is not applicable to the above proposition.) Third, the things God tells the children of men are certain to come to pass, unless He appends a contingency to the same. Fourth, those things He tells us do not become certain at the time He tells them, or simply because He tells them; they were always certain, or He would not have told them. “The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations (Psalm 33.11).” His counsel shall stand. His thoughts are to all generations! “Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119.89).” The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness (Psalm 111.7,8).”

With these few remarks to preface our subject we return to the text at our heading, trusting the Lord may give us direction.

ISRAEL UNDER THE JUDGES.

“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 21.25).” Thus the book of judges closes. It is worthy of note that this last verse was, in similar language, recorded three other times in the book, (Judges 17.6; 18.1; 19.1). The twelve tribes, without any predominant leaders as were Moses and Joshua, attempted to maintain their own local affairs, both civic and religious. Except for what is recorded in Judges 1.1, and in times of extreme distress, there is no mention that the Israelites called upon God for guidance. They did call upon Him in Judges 21.3 regarding the decimation of the tribe of Benjamin, but there is no record that God was pleased to directly answer them.

It was a dark period in the history of Israel. Failure was stamped upon their every activity.

It is this failure of Israel under the judges that draws our attention to the subject of predestination. We have previously affirmed (The Remnant Volume 9, No.5) that the actions of the kings of Canaan, along with their subjects, were absolutely predestinated. So too were the actions of the tribes of Israel. Though some may consider this position abhorrent, finding it difficult to believe even the failures of Israel were subject to the eternal purposes of God, let us test the matter with of God’s Word. “Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand (Judges 1.1,2).” The continuation of the conquest of Canaan was then led by the tribe of Judah. They were to fulfill the commission given them in Deuteronomy 20.16-18 to exterminate everything that breathed. “And the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron (Judges 1.19).” Even though the Lord directed Judah to go up, and was with them in the battle, their conflict with the enemy ended in only partial success. So it was with Benjamin, Verse 21; with Manasseh, Verse 27; with Ephraim, Verse 29; with Zebulun, Verse 30; with Asher, Verse 31; with Naphtali, Verse 33; with Dan, Verse 34. What went wrong? Surely God did not deceive the tribes. We are certain He could have given them complete victory had He been pleased to do so.

“And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, Twill never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord (Judges 2.1-5).” This recounting of the travels of Israel is very revealing. Jehovah had made a covenant with them and swore He would never break the same. Israel, however, did not obey His voice and were asked by God, “why have ye done this?” This was not asked because God was limited in knowledge. He asked them so that it would drive home the point; they had sinned.

“Wherefore I also said... (Verse 3).” This is recorded in the past tense. At the time God revealed His covenant with Israel and gave them instructions, He also said, “I will not drive them out from before

you.” It is clear when reading this carefully that God had also said, before they had failed in serving Him, that He would not drive the enemy out before them. To review then, God had made a covenant with His people, Israel, and in swearing to their fathers (Verse 1), promised to never break it, and at the same time He also said He would not drive out the heathen. Yet, we also see that He did drive out some of the heathen. There is no contradiction, brethren. God did what He said He would do, to the extent He was pleased, and that, based on His eternal will, and further confirmed it by His covenant with Israel, as related in Deuteronomy, chapters 29 and 30. In that covenant Israel was apprised of the following: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29.29).” We conclude from this that God did not show them (or us) some things, which He there said were secret. They, and we, are shown such things as please God to reveal unto us. This must also include the manner in which He assisted the Israelites in their battles with the inhabitants of Canaan.

As before mentioned, Israel miserably failed to follow the instructions given them by God through both Moses and Joshua. The question then to be answered is, was this miserable failure embraced in the predestination of God? We answer with another question: If these failures and apostasy were not predestinated, how came they to occur? It has before been shown that God certainly knew what would and did take place, thus His perfect knowledge fully complimented His perfect will for all to come to pass as He was pleased. A perfect knowledge and a perfect will in the matter certainly appears to also compliment a perfect purpose for all these events; thus they must have been predestinated or decreed prior to the execution of the same. Surely no person that fears God thinks He waited to react to these failures until they transpired. This would categorize the affairs of time to a situation similar to a chess match; First, the sinner would make his move, and then God would be obliged to react according to the quality of move the sinner executed, or simply do nothing and leave the affairs of men to their will and whim rather than His infinite wisdom. We are persuaded this seeming quandry is best answered by deferring to the government of God, and confessing that predestination is infinitely superior to free will.

THE JUDGES.

After the death of Joshua and the elders that outlived him (Judges 2.7), the tribes of Israel went a whoring after other gods. “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Balaam (Judges 2.11).” They forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth until the anger of the Lord was hot against them. Thus He delivered them into the hands of spoilers, their enemies round about them (Judges 2.12-14). Having no king, the twelve tribes did that which seemed right in their own eyes. It might appear to the casual observer that God had fully given them over to satisfy their own lusts, and to work their own devices without interference. Far from it, His purposes were coming to pass despite what seemed such an evil cloud over His chosen people. “Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so (Judges 2.16, 17).” Surely we are not to believe that the Lord raised up judges for Israel as an after-thought, or because it was the best He could do with bad circumstances. That doctrine might suit the Fullerites, Arminians, Conditionalists, and assorted other workmongers, but it shall never do for those that have been taught by the Spirit of God that He works all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1.11). No sir! The plan of God was going on with definite and precise execution, Israel’s sins notwithstanding. “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from

ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46.10).” These judges served the pleasure of God for that period in Israel’s history even though the people would not hearken unto them. His counsel stood, even though the Israelites could not.

It should be carefully observed when reading the book of Judges that God had not forsaken His people. They would sin, often grievously. Then God would raise up their enemies round about them to vex them. After sufficient suffering, determined by God’s secret purposes, Israel would cry unto Him, the God they had forsaken, for deliverance, and God would, according to His good pleasure and infinite counsel, raise up judges to rescue His chosen ones. This cycle of events covered a period of about 450 years.

It should also be pointed out that none of these judges were persons of any great significance or class. Some were themselves rancorous individuals. The judges were by name, Othniel, Judges 3.9; Ehud, Judges 3.15; Shamgar, Judges 3.31; Deborah and Barak, Judges 4.4-6; Gideon, Judges 6.11; Abimelech, more properly a local schismatic king over the men of Shechem, Judges 9.6; Tola, Judges 10.1; Jair, Judges 10.3; Jephthah, Judges 11.1; Ibzan, Judges 12.8; Elon, Judges 12.11; Abdon, Judges 12.13; Samson, Judges 13.24. Of these judges, four are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as men of faith, and yet three of these, Samson, Gideon and Jephthah were also men of very bothersome conduct, especially Gideon, (Judges 8.27). For emphasis, we repeat the following text again: Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them (Judges 2.16).”

The reign of the judges over wicked Israel was obviously temporal, and yet it was instituted for a predetermined purpose that seemed good in the Lord’s sight, even though Arminians find it hard to swallow. What was that predetermined purpose? “I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it or not (Judges 2.21, 22ff).” This business was to prove the twelve tribes! It surely was not to prove it to God, for He knew all that would transpire before He formed the universe and all things in it. Over a long series of transgressions, of Israel groaning before the Lord, and He then raising up judges to deliver His people, God was proving the Israelites both unable and unwilling to serve their God under such a regimen. But this was the way which He had ordained; they were to be proved, both to themselves and to the saints of God for centuries afterward. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Romans 15.4).”

SUMMARY.

In summary, we see Israel then in their land of promise. But they had no powerful men raised up of God to lead them as did Moses and Joshua years before. There was no king in Israel, so they attempted to follow what seemed right in their vain imaginations. Failure and debasement followed swiftly and surely. For over four centuries they were given a succession of judges, no better than themselves, to serve until God, in His anger, gave them a king. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. I will be thy king; where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid (Hosea 13.9-12).”

What is related here regarding the judges may also be said of Israel under the kings. Just as they failed those four and one-half (more or less) centuries while under the rule of judges, they failed for many

more centuries under their kings. They were being proved, years after years that neither the law, judges, kings, or their own devices could make them a willing and obedient people. If given eyes to see, we are blessed to observe that nothing but God's direct hand through Jesus our Lord and the work of the Holy Spirit in us can render us suitable to walk in His ways. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Philippians 2.13)." We hold that God's good pleasure is as old as God Himself. Why was it that these poor Israelites could only fail? Was it in their own power to do otherwise? No; "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Romans 13.1)." This surely brings us again to predestination. What else can ordained of God mean?

Israel failed, true enough and sadly so, at least from appearance. However, in all this we are driven to the inescapable position that their failure, as well as ours, teaches us that "...without me ye can do nothing (John 15.5)."

If the whole of the Old Testament was read through from beginning to ending it would show us much the same thing this brief Book of Judges shows us; God had prepared something better for us from the foundation of the world, and that was the Lamb slain. This is our acceptable sacrifice before the Father. If we are numbered among the chosen then we have been predestinated to be conformed to His image, Romans 8.29. Nothing, and no one, can conform us but He who secures the future from the past. That is predestination. Moses could not conform the Israelites, nor could Joshua. The people could not conform themselves by doing what was right in their own eyes. The judges did not succeed and each king in succession failed to produce even one case of conformity.

We conclude with that glorious summation of truth as written by Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Romans 11.33-36)." We would repeat Paul's last word: AMEN! If all things are of Him, and all things are through Him, and finally, all things are to Him, then it appears certain to us that the wisdom and knowledge of God not only embraces all things, but all things are bound up in the omnipresence of God. God, in His fulness, Jesus Christ, upholds all things by the word of His power, and by Him all things consist. Surely our God is, as our former brethren used to say, everywhere present, and nowhere absent. His very being encompasses all worlds, all events, and all time, as well as all eternity. Words fail poor sinners to fully express His majesty. AMEN!

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RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

Only two of the sixty-six books of the Bible are named after women; the book of Ruth and the book of Esther. The similarities and common threads in the two are most striking. Foremost among these similarities is that of God raising up an unlikely and obscure woman to fulfill His divine will and purpose towards His chosen people, Israel. While the book of Esther never mentions the name of God, His presence permeates every word of the entire episode. In the book of Ruth, however, the Lord is frequently referred to by name, but only in the text above is His direct involvement mentioned. The significance of this is both beautiful and apparent. We hope to develop that significance later in this article. By the Lord’s help we will at the same time show how the improbable union of Ruth and Boaz, attended by the birth of a son, was nothing less than a product of absolute predestination. We add, what else could it be? If not a result of predestination, this union and conception must have been simply the extenuation of a random string of fortuitous happenings; products of the vagaries of chance.

THE BACKGROUND

“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 21.25).” Thus concludes the events recorded in the book of Judges. A more grim expression of wanton disregard for the government of God cannot be found throughout the whole of the Old Testament. Spiritual anarchy, if not in fact at least in attitude, abounded. But it is on this dismal canvas of wholesale rebellion that the Spirit draws out the resplendent lines of the everlasting purposes of God for His covenant people. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, even if dimly seen at the time.

Follow now the wondrous continuity of God’s revelation: The book of Ruth opens with “Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons (Ruth 1.1).” Based on the genealogy of Elimelech’s kinsman, Boaz, in chapter 4, we discover that these events in the book of Ruth transpired in the early years of the reign of the judges. So, as we have proposed, there is a specific link between the book of Judges and the kings of Israel. The book of Ruth contains the scarlet thread by which the Divine objective ties the periods together.

All these events of the book of Ruth are bound up in the circumstances that affected the tribes of Israel after entering the land of promise. It was a period when they had no king, so they did that which seemed right in their own eyes. Their hearts were inclined to practice free-will; the practice of all men when left to themselves. Were then God’s eternal purposes for his people frustrated? Did these troubled Israelites somehow break His bands asunder? “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand (Proverbs 19.21).” God’s purposes are never frustrated; no matter how confused and chaotic the appearance of things.

There is also another vital link; one so clear that we cannot see how any could read this book without observing it, unless the reader has been judicially blinded. This book, named after Ruth, closes with, “And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David (Ruth 4.22).” So then, the book of Judges closes with the solemn fact of the absence of a king over Israel. The book of Ruth, following next in the interwoven succession of the books of the Bible, and being an ancillary history of the period when the judges ruled, closes with an unmistakable prophecy of David, the king after God’s own heart. The book of Ruth, then, clearly ties the book of Judges and their sad history, with the books of Samuel and the reign of the kings over Israel. Moreover, this simple story of Ruth and Boaz displays vividly an Old Testament picture of those things that pertain to Christ and His bride. To dwell presently on this point would carry us too far afield from our main topic, so we can only suggest that the reader meditate upon it as the Lord may bless.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The famine.

There is no mention of any famines in the book of Judges, so we cannot know more about this particular famine that moved the family of Beth-lehem-judah to sojourn in Moab than what is stated: there was a famine in the land. We do know from the Scriptures that famines are not simple accidents of “Mother Nature.” For evidence of this, see I Kings 17.1; Psalm 105.16; Ezekiel 5.16, 17; Luke 4.25; Revelation 8.6-8. God, for His good and wise purposes, frequently sent unrest, pestilences, and famines, and the famine that stirred those sojourners to vacate their native land for Moab was no exception. We have absolutely no reason to believe that this family would have gone down to Moab had they not felt compelled (by carnal reasoning) to improve their lot in time of famine. No famine; no move. But, there was a famine, and they did go to Moab; thus the execution of a series of eternally ordained and connected events that led directly to the birth of the son mentioned in the text at our heading.

Lest someone with Arminian inclinations feels we attempt to blame God for the sojourning of this family, we offer the response of Jeremiah regarding this, and all other similar situations: “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jeremiah 10.23).” Clearly, God sent a famine at that specific time. It is also clear too, that in His holy, infallible wisdom, God directed the steps of the family of Elimelech directly to the land of Moab. There the further purposes of God would unfold to bring about all that He had determined beforehand to bring to pass. This family had in mind a destination. They would go to Moab and ride out the famine. They obviously were determined to go, for they went. God, however, had eternally determined their destination; yea, before they had an existence He had predetermined the end of their sojourn from the beginning. From the beginning of the whole episode to the end, including all things in between, it was as certain as if it had already come to pass. This is the blessed, soul-comforting doctrine of the absolute predestination of all things. Heathens may rage, and those that are madly in love with the futile system called free will may resist, yet the counsel of the Lord standeth sure.

The family of Elimelech.

With the exception of Naomi, little is said of this family beyond their names, where they came from, where they went, and that they died. This particular family consisted of Elimelech, the husband, Naomi, the wife, and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. We are informed twice in the first two verses of the book that they were from Beth-lehem-judah and were known as Ephrathites, which was the ancient

name of the vicinity around Bethlehem. It should also be mentioned that it was out of this same place from which our Lord was to come, according to Micah 5.2. How beautiful it is then to see that even though Elimelech and his family had for all appearances abandoned so important a place, it was through this very forsaking their homeland that one of the descendants resulting from Lot's incest, Ruth the Moabitess, was to be brought up from a cursed land and people to find favor from Boaz. Boaz was to be the divinely appointed father of one of the members of that line through which our Lord Jesus Christ was to come. Ruth was to be the mother. Surely, God moves in mysterious ways! Readers, this is sacred ground, though despised by those that love free-will.

The family of Ruth.

To lay some preliminary groundwork for our premise that the child born of Ruth and Boaz, Obed by name, was the direct product of an unbreakable series of predestinated acts, we shall look back to the account of Lot. We might well go back further, but this should be sufficient for those with eyes to see.

“And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abrabam, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt (Genesis 19.29).” Did Lot simply get a sudden religious urge to abandon Sodom? No! According to this text, God sent Lot out of the midst! It was God's purpose to send Lot out; thus it was His eternal will as well. We know from the Bible that God is of one mind, meaning there are no new wills or new purposes with Him. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him (Ecclesiastes 3.14).” And too, Lot must have been there in Sodom, for God had purposed to send him out. There had to be a Sodom for Lot to be there, and there had to be one called Lot to be there at that time to be sent out. Is it not clear that for every incident that transpires there are many numbers of other vitally related incidents necessary to insure the execution of the one; in this case the sending of Lot from Sodom?

Clearly, God had always purposed to send Lot out from the midst of the cities of the plain. Had this vital link in the chain of events, the leaving Sodom, been left to Lot's choice, he might just as well have stayed where he was, rather than leaving. Who is to say what Lot might have done if God had no purpose, one way or the other, in deciding the issue? But, Lot did leave; right on time we might add. (As an added thought, we ask, was Lot's being sent out of Sodom an act of the grace and mercy of God, or was it simply an act of willing, “time-salvation” obedience on the part of Lot? See the expression, “he lingered” in Genesis 19.16.)

Next, Lot's daughters contrived a fleshly plot to preserve seed from their father. Are we to suppose, using the carnal reasoning of the opponents of predestination, that these two daughters might just as well have done otherwise; or that they “ought to have” disdained such a wicked scheme? If they had done what many pseudo religionists suggest, and suppressed their unholy goals, what then would have become of the two sons that were born of the incestuous dalliance with their father, Lot? “And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day (Genesis 19.37).” Displayed as vividly on the pages of the Bible as John 3.16, or Psalm 23 are the beginnings of the family from whence came Ruth, Obed, Jesse, David, and our blessed Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Are we to believe that God might just as well have retrieved some other damsel to bear the son of Boaz as Ruth? Just as well then might He have sent His Holy Spirit upon some other maiden of Israel than Mary to bear His only begotten Son. The thought is repulsive and it is unscriptural; it is also inconsistent with what we are blessed to know of the mind of our eternal God.

IN THE LAND OF MOAB.

In Ruth 1.1, we are informed that Elimelech and his family went to the country of Moab to sojourn. Sojourn means a journey of only a temporary nature; not permanent. In verse 2, however, it relates that they continued there! How vastly different do poor sinners' plans develop from their initial expectations. We are fully persuaded that the hand of God detained them in the country of Moab that His purposes might transpire. Cowper expressed it as follows:

“His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.”

And, just as we learn of their continuing in Moab we are also informed that Elimelech, Naomi's husband died. This was no doubt a blow to the family, but the head of this sojourning family was gone! His earthly race had been run.

Conditionalists will stoutly affirm that Elimelech died as a chastisement sent by God to punish Elimelech for his disobedience; he died before his time for running off to Moab. Well, now! this strange view deserves some serious examination. First, how could Elimelech, or anyone else for that matter, die before their time, unless they had a time? If they had a time to die (and they do, Ecclesiastes 3.2) how could they expire any other time than that time? The argument seems more than incongruous, not to mention absurd. Second, if Elimelech was indeed a child of God, a point the Conditionalist affirms in order to have God kill him for disobedience, would not God have done Elimelech a favor by killing him, rather than his death being a punishment? We learn from Paul that to die is gain (Philippians 1.21); thus, according to Conditionalist reasoning, Elimelech was ultimately a real winner in this episode. Conditionalists struggle mightily to prove that the doctrine of absolute predestination leads to, and makes excuses for, sin. Yet, by the application of their weird view, it was the sin of Elimelech that led to his short-cut to heaven. As we understand it, if God may kill you for sinning, and take you to heaven by death, even before the time He appointed (which time, they say, you don't even have) then if we would simply sin, sin, and sin, God would finally (in exasperation with our disobedience?) exterminate our life, and we would then be free of all earthly cares and trials. To borrow from an earthly expression, “What a way to go!” We say in all seriousness, that it is the contrived doctrine of conditionalism that would ultimately lead to sin, not the blessed truth of God's eternal decrees or absolute predestination. Elimelech died because the harvest was ripe, as is the case with all the children of God, assuming in hope that Elimelech was numbered among the elect.

Consider now Naomi. God did not take her life as He did Elimelech. Yet she too left Beth-lehem-judah to sojourn in Moab. If Elimelech transgressed the will of God can Naomi be excused? It appears plain enough to us that Elimelech died and Naomi lived that the way be cleared for a kinsman-redeemer, Boaz. Of this we shall consider later. “He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints (Proverbs 2.8).” Surely the path and way of Naomi was kept and preserved; not by Naomi, but by God, Who was directing her steps. “A man's [and woman's] heart deviseth his way; but the Lord

directeth his steps (Proverbs 16.9).” Elimelech and Naomi had, no doubt, devised a plan in their heart to further their earthly accommodations by sojourning in Moab; yet it was after all but another step straight into the Lord’s eternal purposes. To our puny mind, it is a source of much joy and comfort to see that there is a predestinated plan that involves every step of our lives to finally lead us to the grand banks of the pure river that flows from the throne of God.

It is true enough that Naomi was experiencing sore trials and tribulations; however, our own experience teaches us that “trials make the promise sweet” and “...tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience hope (Romans 5.3,4).” Surely, God was leading her to a better life, though she probably knew nothing of it at the time. Naomi’s husband had died and there were still additional trials to come. Trials, we may add, that were as necessary to the fulfilling of God’s eternal plan as the rising of the sun.

The children of Israel were not to marry among the heathen nations, Deuteronomy 7.3ff, and yet that is just what the sons of Elimelech and Naomi did in the land of Moab. “And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years (Ruth 1.3,4).” We have little doubt that these two sons married to satisfy their natural cravings, yet had they not married, then there would have been no Ruth, the daughter-in-law, to return to Beth-lehem-judah with Naomi. How marvelous it is when we are blessed to see that this long series of events, spanning many years and involving numerous people, was leading directly to the union of a Moabite damsel and a prince of Israel, Boaz. The Lord willing, we hope to follow this train of God’s wise dealings with His children in another article.

The Remnant

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Number 8

RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

In our last article on this subject we related the sorrowful occurrences befalling the family of Elimelech during their sojourn in the country of Moab. Elimelech died, and his two sons took wives of the women of Moab. About ten years later both sons died (Ruth 1.4). Naomi was then left alone in a land of a cursed people with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Viewing the situation from the human perspective, circumstances could hardly be worse. Tragedies in frequent succession had visited this wandering family. Far from home, and facing a bleak future, Naomi is depicted as a classic example of those that wander out of the way.

Our general subject, however, is predestination; the predestination of all things; and it is from that perspective we hope to view these dismal circumstances striking the entire family of Elimelech. To delve into the myriad circumstances, that in combination form the whole of the travels of the family of Elimelech, as seen from the human standpoint, would show us nothing more than if we were to pick at random any family of the sons of Adam to scrutinize. We would see only a cluster of incidents that appeared to simply evolve with the passing of time. Not so, however, if the Lord shall bless us with a glimpse of that which is spiritual, for it will then all be seen to unfold from a divine plan, decreed in eternity, and coming to pass with heavenly exactness and precision sufficient to magnify the wisdom of the God Who predestinated all.

NAOMI RETURNS HOME

Naomi did not simply decide to return home as a natural consequence of her trials and afflictions. There was a reason of sufficient importance to turn her steps to the fold of God. “Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread (Ruth 1.6).” Good news from a far country (Israel, the place of rest for its citizens) was dispatched to this poor wayfaring stranger. We are not told who brought this blessed news; it might well have been a revelation from God Himself. What we do see is that at the lowest moment in her life, hope revived from a simple message. That message fully turned her heart and being towards Beth-lehem-judah, which means the place of bread. Contained in that reviving message was one simple word that appears to have made the difference between an ordinary dispatch of intelligence and a soul stirring report replete with hope. It was the word, “how.” Naomi did not simply hear that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread; she heard how He had visited them. If the Lord wills, we hope to explain later the reason the word how made such a compelling difference in turning Naomi towards home once again.

Naomi and her daughters-in-law obviously were not starving; nor were the rest of the inhabitants of the land of Moab. She had been there over ten years, and was at the time of the message of bread from God

sufficiently strong to begin a long arduous journey home. It is important as well to observe that none of the citizens of Moab were stirred to go to Beth-lehem-judah, which suggests that this news of bread there was either not a great stirring report throughout the land, or that it was kept from them by God. Had the Moabites been starving as a nation surely some of them would have headed out to nourish themselves in a foreign land, much as did the sons of Jacob centuries earlier when the famine drove them to Egypt. We would again suggest that the how God had visited His people was the reason for matters being as they were.

A journey from Moab to Beth-lehem-judah would probably take several weeks for these women to traverse, and since they arrived home at “the beginning of barley harvest (Ruth 1.22),” and barley being the first grain crop to be harvested in the year, then it follows that they left in the hope of anticipated bounty, and not that which actually existed. Simply put, Naomi walked by faith! (It is worth mention that faith was a gift of God then as much as it was when Paul wrote the book of Ephesians.) Should it be conjectured that they heard of last year’s harvest, those putting up such a theory would have to explain why Naomi would consider last years crop a guarantee for a harvest the following year. Either way, there must have been some assurance that God had something in store even for her, which leads us back to the opinion that the good news she heard had come directly from the mouth of God, and particularly so when the how is taken into account.

“They went on the way to return unto the land of Judah (Ruth 1.7).” They, meaning, Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth; three widows. But how little did they know of how the journey would end as they set out for Beth-lehem-judah. Three began to journey to Judah, but according to Divine providence only two would arrive at the house of bread. It must be remembered that of the four family members of Elimelech that left Judah originally, only Naomi was yet alive to return. Upon this profound fact we must digress to ponder its import, for the deaths of the male members of the family of Elimelech are indispensable links in the predestinated sequence of events that leads to the birth of Obed.

While the living know they must die (Ecclesiastes 9.5), nevertheless it often comes with stark suddenness. However, death also comes by Divine appointment (Hebrews 9.27). It might be argued that this was an appointment for the family of Adam as a whole, it still must be remembered that the sum of the whole is made up of all its parts, (or the sum of the parts make up the whole) meaning that all the sons and daughters of Adam were appointed unto death, whether separately or collectively. Solomon has apprised us that we have a time to die (Ecclesiastes 3.2) and when one has been given eyes to see spiritual things the saints are most glad that it is so. Consider: if there was no specific time to die, then Ruth might just as well have died by some means or another, even suicide, resulting from grief over the death of her husband, and what then of the Divine appointment for her child?

Thus, the appointed times came for Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion to die and leave their wives behind as disconsolate but living widows. The sable shades of death had closed upon the last chapter of their lives; but not before they had fulfilled that which was divinely ordered for them. It was imperative that they go to Moab. “How so?” asks the objector. For the plainest of all reasons is the answer. The two sons must marry among the daughters of that cursed land. “Why so?” responds the objector again. Again, the reason seems, to us at least, very plain. The sons of Elimelech must die, but not until after bringing the daughters of Moab into their family by marriage, to prepare the way for another of the grand moments of the eternal decrees, also known as absolute predestination. To our mind, it is clear; if the sons had not first married in Moab, and then died, there was no possible way for Ruth to eventually marry Boaz. Thus they, Ruth and Boaz, could have no son, as was recorded in our text at the heading of

this article. And what then of that son, Obed; of his time to be born? Unless someone can share with us a portion of biological intelligence regarding the process of procreation we may previously have missed then it must be concluded, the birth of Obed hung on every event of the scene just described above. A line from one of our beloved hymns might well be recited in harmony with this episode:

“Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown;
Hang on His firm decree.”

We verily think that the denial of predestination, here in this beautiful story and elsewhere, raises a whole lot more questions than it can possibly answer. And, we would inquire, if all this complex scenario was not the direct result of predestination, what was it the result of? What the world calls chance or fortuitous events? If so, then it was a random combining of extremely unlikely events, somehow all coming together at absolutely necessary junctures, involving several unrelated families from two antagonistic nations, during a span of over ten years, and at the last amazingly meshing together in perfect pattern of harmony, to the very last detail, with such grand precision that God would not need to will, decree, purpose or predestinate anything; He could just borrow from the Fates what they capriciously dealt out to Him, and it yet, somehow, would perfectly fit that which He would have planned, if He had planned, but did not, lest it make Him somehow the author of sin, or possibly violate the free-will of His own created subjects. And Lo! Obed would be born without the least assistance of the will of God! And all this coming together as if woven by the hand of a cunning workman. The idea suggests to us what we heard an opponent of evolution say in opposition to that theory. He proposed that the probability of successful evolution was the equivalent of exploding a bomb in a large sack containing millions of alphabet letters and out of that explosive instant came a perfect dictionary; printed, bound and ready to read. We agree with his assessment and consider the conclusions applicable in the case of Ruth. May our great Sovereign be praised, we have been made to prefer absolute predestination over any other possible (rather impossible) alternatives.

During the early part of the journey homeward Naomi kindly exhorted her two daughters-in-law to return to their mother’s house that there they may find rest with another husband (Ruth 1.8,9). She kissed them; they all lifted up their voices in weeping. The two young widows both said, “Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.” It is doubtful that, at that moment, both the daughters-in-law knew of what they said, yet we are satisfied Naomi was reasonably cognizant of their respective characters, and with good reason. She had observed them for ten years at least. And if we are correct in our assessment of what the how God had visited His people meant, then Naomi was sure that one of the widows, Orpah, would not follow on to the house of bread; neither indeed could she.

“And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law (Ruth 1.14,15).” The fearful, but needful, moment of separation had now gripped the little family circle. These two Moabite girls are severed one from another; both for time and eternity; a solemn thought indeed. Then Orpah bid Naomi farewell with a kiss, but there is no mention that she even passed a glance toward Ruth in departing. Perhaps she was ashamed; perhaps she was indifferent. But certainly, at that moment it was surely manifest that she was different! She was, forever, “gone back.” Finality was indelibly stamped upon this moment of lasting division. From that moment on, the pursuits of Orpah would be among the people of Moab, her natural kin. Her ties with the family from Beth-lehem-judah existed no longer. In the absence of further evidence we may safely

conclude that Orpah would die as she was born; a heathen of Moab. Surely her turning back was as solemn as that of Lot's wife or that of Demas leaving Paul in the work of the gospel.

But what of Ruth? The text says she clave unto Naomi. This was not simply consent that she would follow on. It was a cleaving, or holding close, as if fearful of losing that which was dear to her. Clearly, there was then an indisputable and distinct difference between these two daughters of Moab. Ruth manifested a yearning for a life with Naomi, her people, and her God, and Orpah was content to return to her former associations. Her years of association with the family of Elimelech, their ways, and their God had not persuaded Orpah to follow on to know more. Can there be a clearer testimony in the Word of God that there must be a spiritual work to bring one to love the family of election to the end? Is it not so that "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved?"

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive (I Corinthians 4.7)?" We propose that this question was as valid at the time Ruth and Orpah separated as it was when Paul interrogated the Corinthians, that they might see the blessed hand of God in every diversity of life. Consider: Ruth and Orpah had much in common; heritage, culture, religion, age, marriage union in the family of Elimelech, devotion to their mother-in-law, and no doubt many other things. But Orpah turns back! She departs; never to mingle or fellowship with Ruth, Naomi and her people again, and that forevermore. It is our studied opinion, after many years of traveling this way, that God had made the difference between these two daughters of Moab. Before the mountains of Moab were ever formed, Ruth was, by divine decree, predestinated to be the mother of Obed; thus there must be a clearing, ordering and moving of all other events necessary to bring to pass this pre-ordained birth of the child. His, Obed's, lot was to be of the line royal to Christ; thus all else complimentary or necessary for his appointed birth must be in perfect harmony. Semi-perfect harmony would not do; it must have been all, else it just as well must have been nothing.

A further proof that there was no critical life and death famine ongoing at that time was the departure of Orpah from Naomi and Ruth to return back home to Moab. Whatever the circumstances may have been, they were not dire enough to compel Orpah to journey on with Naomi and Ruth, if only for the purpose of gaining food. We again strongly emphasize that it was not simply the news of bread supplied by God in Beth-lehem-judab; it was how God would supply it that stirred in Naomi a longing to return; a longing conspicuously absent in Orpah. It is also worthy of considerable notice that from the testimony of Ruth to Naomi in verse 15 and 16 that neither did Ruth, at this time, understand what it really was that moved Naomi to return home. The relation of Ruth's feelings to her mother-in-law is beautiful beyond description; it is a soul-stirring account of love and devotion unparalleled in the Scriptures, yet it contains not a trace of evidence that Ruth had the least notion of what was, by Divine ordination, in store for her. She offers not one hint that there was in her soul a longing for another Israelite husband. She betrays no evidence that the matter of near-kinsman marriages was known to her. Her testimony was one of pure devotion only. Simply, she pours out her feelings and emotions as she felt them, solely for the purposes of intreating Naomi to desist in requesting she return home with Orpah and to express the tender feelings of her heart as she at that time felt them.

RUTH'S TESTIMONY

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1.16, 17)." May we pause and wonder. Can such language come

from any but a sinner saved by grace? Has David expressed his soul more vividly in any of the Psalms? Is sweeter language found in the Song of Solomon? No; we are persuaded that Ruth spoke as clearly of the work begun in her soul by the Lord as any of the Old Testament saints, and every word perfectly comports with the language of the New Testament. This is high ground indeed! Furthermore, it is the ground of predestination.

Some dexterous-minded Bible expositors have erroneously contrived a less than luke-warm doctrine called “limited predestination.” They allow that some things, those that pertain to eternal salvation, are predestinated, but nothing else, lest God somehow be guilty of predestinating what, to their minds, are evil things. Well then! we have a text just suited for them right here. And, we hasten to say, much more too when viewed in the light of the circumstances. We are sure even these luke-warm expositors will admit that Ruth gave tremendous evidence of being one that loved God and His people. None but the most bitter enemies of free grace could deny that God had begun a great work in this Moabite damsel; and that based on His foreknowledge of her in the everlasting covenant. If that be admitted, then it follows she is among those included in the parameters of the following: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans 8.29, 30),”

This, then, is concrete evidence of some predestination in the life of Ruth. She was predestinated to be conformed to the image of Jesus, her yet unborn Lord. BUT – if Ruth had decided to go back with Orpah, a real possibility in the mind of limited predestinarians, then Obed would have never been born, and Obed must be born, for he was in the line from Seth to Jesus, whose image Ruth was to be conformed to. We will not retrace all the other events previously mentioned necessary to consummate the union of Ruth and Boaz, but shall note that all of them, from the least to the greatest, were as necessary as this single turn of events, or not even this “limited predestination” could be possible. It appears clear as the noon day sun that for Ruth to be conformed to the image of Jesus either all must be predestinated, or nothing could be predestinated, for predestination makes the things certain that are determined beforehand. Some certain things and some uncertain things cannot possibly co-exist without the probability of everything failing, due to the existence of things uncertain in the chain of events. If, as we assert boldly, Ruth was an elected vessel of mercy, then every event that could possibly be either directly or indirectly related to her sojourn must be absolutely predestinated, else she could fail of the predestination to the conformity to Jesus, her coming Lord. Dear readers, this will stand when the heavens are rolled up as a scroll, and the worlds are burned to a cinder and the ashes disappear into nothingness.

“The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow (Proverbs 15.25).” The house of the proud, that flimsy, predestination-hating house of unhumiliated Arminians, built on a sand foundation of contempt for God’s government, will certainly be destroyed, and that without remedy or recourse, while at the same time the pleasant borders, walled about by Jesus our Savior, will be established on eternal purposes for Ruth, and every other widow being led to Zion’s gates. It is the Lord’s will to destroy the house of the proud; it is the Lord’s will to establish the borders of Ruth. His will is as everlasting as Himself.

By His grace we expect to take up this subject again in our next article with the hope of attempting to explain what the “how” God visited His people in giving them bread means.

Number 9

RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued from No.8)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

THE RETURN TO BETH-LEHEM-JUDAH.

Preface.

The remnant of the family of Elimelech had been reduced to two widows, Naomi and Ruth; one a wandering Jew returning to her inheritance, and the other a Moabitish damsel, who, bereft of her husband, seeks a better country. Orpah had gone back to her people and her gods, and Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion had died in Moab.

Now the natural eye may see in these two widows an unimportant pair of shuffling travelers “down on their luck.” We are constrained, however, to entertain much fonder hopes for these two lonely sojourners than do those that see only the transient affairs of this world (II Corinthians 4.18). “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him (I Corinthians 2.9).” Surely it cannot be doubted seriously that Ruth was numbered among those that “love him” for “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren (I John 3.14).” “But,” it may be countered, “Ruth did not show any genuine evidence at that time of loving God; she simply manifested a loving attachment to Naomi personally, and her love to Naomi’s God and people were incidental.” Even should we concede the point, which we do not, it must be kept in mind that only a short while later Ruth’s character was fully recognized, by no less than Boaz, with the following: “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust (Ruth 2.12).” The point to consider is this: Ruth did love the Lord, which is concrete evidence that God had first loved her! (See I John 4.19.) This brings us again to our theme of predestination.

Romans 8.28.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8.28).” Ruth the Moabite is fully identified by two expressions in this text. First, she was undeniably among those that love God, for He had first loved her. Second, she had, though unknown at the time, been called according to God’s purpose. It cannot be disputed that Ruth had been called of God, for she was, in the progression of God’s will, brought into marriage union with Boaz and bare their son, Obed, of the generation of Jesus. (See Ruth 4.18-22; Matthew 1.5.) Thus, all things were working together for good to her. Notice, the text does not say all things were working

together for good for her, but rather, working together for good to her. A careful reading of Romans 8.28 will establish that nothing is said of all things being good. Neither is it said that all things work (alone) for good. It is rather said that all things work together for good. Observe as well that even though all things work together for good, they, in themselves, never become good. Sin remains sin; righteousness remains righteousness, but as they are jointly employed by the wisdom and purpose of God, they perfectly work together for good. The working together is for good, that is, the good purpose of God, and culminates in that good purpose of God to those that love God (who were first loved by Him). The “all things work together for good” is the execution of God’s purpose for His elect, and the “to them that love God” is the application of the purpose of God.

We see then that the whole spectrum of events constituting the life of Ruth perfectly harmonized, without fail, and without exception in conforming her to the image of Christ. Paul describes this ordering of events by a variant of the word “predestination” in Romans 8.29: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Arriving home.

“So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi (Ruth 1.19)?” Many there are that having begun a project or a journey never saw its completion. But God, however, safely brought these two widows to their journey’s end. What followed was far beyond what either of them could ever have imagined. We need to look no farther than the family of Elimelech to see sufficient evidence that the way of man is not in himself. Consider too in this connection the words of James as an appropriate expression of caution. “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away (James 4.13,14).” Could these words be more expressive to the circumstances of the family of Elimelech even had they been spoken directly unto them? Off they had gone; hot-footing it to the distant country of Moab, little regarding what should be on the morrow. And what of their plans to secure themselves from the famine? All dashed! What started out as a sojourn, (Ruth 1.1), became a continuance, (verse 2), and sudden permanency in death for Elimelech, (verse 3). So too the sons then dwelled there about ten years! Then they too were called from their earthly existence. Death had stalked and overtaken the three male members of the family. But for Ruth and Naomi, there were further purposes, and those by divine appointment, for both of them in the land of promise. Thus, they were led safely to the very place where this episode had first begun.

“And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me (Ruth 1.20,21)?” The case of Naomi fully expresses the meaning of the words of Paul, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man [or woman] soweth, that shall he also reap (Galatians 6.7).” Naomi recognized her family’s sin with, “I went out full.” Thus, says Naomi, “I am Mara” meaning bitter. For many years since going out full from her home, Naomi had drunk from the cup of gall, and eaten the bitter herbs as a consequence of her wanderings. This is the law of sowing and reaping; a law instituted by God. Naomi confesses the blame was hers! Yet at the same time, even while burdened with guilt, she carried with her on the journey home a little portion of hope; hope in the mercies of God. While living the life

of widowhood, she had received the soul-stirring message of how that God had visited His people in giving them bread. Bitter as she was, Naomi was compelled to seek out the Lord's mercies and benefits. She prepared to return home where the hand of God for good was in evidence. We feel sure there are many others of the elect family that have felt much like Naomi in their sojourn; bitter over sin, yet still hoping in the sure promises of Him Who cannot lie.

Notice that Naomi claims no credit for her deliverance. She, along with Ruth, was back home, for "the Lord hath brought me home again." Let there be no doubt here; Naomi was no Conditionalist in her reasoning. She recognized and declared without reservation just where her deliverance came from and, moreover, where it led to. Remember, "...she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread (Ruth 1.6)." This was surely the beginning of her deliverance; it was a timely message to her, even "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country (Proverbs 25.25)."

It might be suggested by a disciple of free-will that Naomi might just as well have stayed in Moab rather than returning home. "After all, the choice was up to her." Speculation such as that may suppose much but it can prove nothing, for the evidence is that the message did stir her and she did return home. God brought her home. Some free-will advocates have suggested that God added this "brought her home" to His eternal purposes after He saw which way her choice inclined her; that it was of her own choosing to go, so God simply incorporated it into His plan at that time. We have seldom heard anything more heaven-daring as this doctrine of "God's contingency plan" and feel humbly thankful that we have been spared from embracing it.

"Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way (Proverbs 20.24)?" If the distraught mind of Naomi could have been explored at the time of her arrival home, surely the substance of this text would have been found to occupy a good portion of her thoughts; she said as much when she spoke to those that asked, "Is this Naomi?" If her goings were of the Lord, as the text plainly states, then her going down first to Moab must be included. "Oh, no!" complains the objector; "that was sin on her part, pure and simple!" And so it was. But the text offers us no distinctions between the good and the bad goings of man. "Man's goings," both the good and what is perceived by us to be bad, "are of the Lord." Naomi offered no pleas. She admitted she was, by her reckoning, full when her goings took her out from Beth-lehem-judah. Whatever that fullness was, her goings that led her home afforded her no room for that previous fullness. God brought her home empty. Simply put, there was now no room for those things that she possessed in going out; her husband, her sons, and, yes, even her self-assurance that creature efforts could sustain them in the times of famine. That natural famine was but an implement in the purposes of God to bring on Naomi a far worse famine; a famine in her soul. All this was to bring Ruth to Boaz. Going out, and going home; all for the bringing to pass the portion of the predestinated plan of redemption allotted to Naomi and also to Ruth and Boaz. May we pause to praise our great God that He has given us a little glimpse of so great a truth regarding so great a salvation.

RUTH'S NEW LIFE.

"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter (Ruth 2.1,2)." When this quotation is examined we are caused to wonder at the fine detail woven by the Spirit of inspiration. Who, for instance, is this Ruth, but an unknown Moabite damsel that married a

sojourning son of Naomi, the widow of Elimelech. And Naomi; who is she among the tribes of Israel? She is but the obscure wife of the sojourner, Elimelech, now also dead and buried in Moab. And who, we ask, was this Elimelech? Except for his expedition to Moab, nothing is known of him except that he was, in some unexplained way, a kinsman of this mighty man of wealth, Boaz. Even so, and important to our study, he still was not nearest of kin with Boaz. (The nearest kinsman would later appear as a potential impediment to a union between Ruth and Boaz.) Nothing more is known of this family and their relationship to Boaz than this; by a series of both ordinary and unique events, famine, travels to cursed lands, and several unusual marriages, Ruth the Moabitess, an alien to the families of Israel, was, by all this, eligible for kinsman-redemption and also marriage among the living family; otherwise she would have died as she must live; without hope or inheritance in Israel. And this, dear reader, is family planning from the eternal perspective. It is planning we call predestination.

It must be stressed once again that Boaz was the kinsman of Elimelech; Naomi's only connection to Boaz was by her marriage to Elimelech. Further-more, and in a more distant relationship, Ruth had redemption rights only because she had married a son of Naomi and Elimelech; an even more distant relationship indeed. But – she was of kin as a result of that marriage, and that was sufficient for all the wondrous events that would follow.

How remarkable it is when we compare the predestinated union of Ruth and Boaz with the predestinated relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. We will pass by this line of study as it has no immediate bearing on our subject for the present but recommend it to the reader as worthy of considerable attention.

“And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.” We direct our attention now to the manifest purpose for the return of Naomi and Ruth to Beth-lehem. Naomi had a wealthy kinsman, Boaz by name, and he was at the time growing barley and wheat which would become the bread with which God would sustain His people. And just as important was the fact that Boaz was a near-kinsman of Naomi and Ruth. He was as well an eligible bachelor.

Naomi had been in Moab for at least ten years. She was, by her own admission, reduced from fullness to poverty. “The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me (Ruth 1.20).” Her husband died, and also her two sons. However, as bad as matters were, she was given room to hope, “For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread (Ruth 1.6).” As mentioned previously, we know not who was the messenger that dispatched this good news to Naomi, whether God or some traveler from across the border. It really does not matter. What matters is that Naomi learns of events back home that were highly unusual; yea, even astounding! Is it too far-fetched to consider that Naomi must have given all these details at least some consideration? We think not.

The Time Frame.

It has been mentioned in a previous article that the events in the book of Ruth took place sometime in the early period of the Judges. That can be established from the chronology given in Ruth, chapter 4. During that time “Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord (Judges 2.12).” Additionally: “So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years (Judges 2.14).” Following that, the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, and Ehud, the second of the judges was raised up to deliver them, which was accomplished by Ehud murdering Eglon, the king of Moab, by shoving a

dagger into his belly during a moment of supposed confidence. Ehud then rallied Israel from the mountain of Ephraim to slay ten thousand Moabites, men of valor. “And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valor; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years (Judges 2.29,30).”

While we cannot say for sure that this was the time of the family of Elimelech going down to Moab, it certainly appears to be the most likely time period. While some have suggested that the time of sojourning by this wayward family was during the leadership of Gideon, we personally reject the idea. The possibility of Boaz being a mighty man of wealth, with vast fields of grain in which his servants labored, and strangers gleaned, during the time of Gideon is easily discounted by the following: “And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites (Judges 6.11).” We learn as well from verse 6 of this chapter that “Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites.” So bad were the circumstances of Israel resulting from the hoards of Midianites swarming the land that it was a business requiring much caution to even attend sufficient crops necessary to sustain one family. We hardly think that Boaz could have attained to the success accounted to him in the book of Ruth except during a time of considerable rest in Israel’s borders. Moreover, it would have been needful for Elimelech and his family to sojourn to Moab only during a time period when the Moabites were in little or no mood for conflict with Israelites.

The Coming Together of Events.

Is the predestination of God somehow involved in all this or not? We are persuaded it is despite the ravings of Arminians. (If predestination cannot be seen here, where then might it be seen? After all, the generation of Christ Himself is involved in the outcome.) View, for a moment, the complementing events that opened the way for the family of Elimelech to venture into the country of Moab. We begin with Eglon, king of Moab. The scriptures tell us that “God strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.” God did not just strengthen Eglon; He strengthened him against Israel. Did Eglon employ only holy and honorable means against Israel to drive them to cry unto Jehovah? Dare we suppose he sent scribes to the 12 tribes who read the law of God to them from dawn till dark, encouraging them to fast and pray? No! What Eglon did was recruit mercenaries from the Ammonite and Amalekite nations who “went and smote Israel (Judges 3.13).” It seems to us impossible to consider the vengeance Eglon took against Israel, vengeance God strengthened him to execute, was in any respect not purely sinful activity. What else could it be? Do we not read that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14.23)?” Eglon was not operating under the influence of the faith once delivered to the saints. Eglon slaughtered the families of Israel and plundered their properties with as much cruel and sinful relish as did any other enemy the Israelites ever encountered. Make no mistake; God sent Eglon against His people to bring evil retribution on them for their sins and it ill becomes anyone to say “What doest thou?” “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it (Amos 3.6)?”

It is just here that the foes of predestination falsely assume they have found a flaw in the doctrine of the universal, absolute, all encompassing, total and complete predestination of events. “Eglon was raised up by God to punish those disobedient Israelites” is their appeal. “The evil in their cities was the evil of punishment; nothing more.” We ask, did not God know when He strengthened Elgon what cruel methods he would employ and yet He nevertheless did so strengthen him? Surely God did know! “O

my, yes; God knew, but He did not approve of the method Eglon used; He only suffered it to be so” is the response we might expect from Arminians and as-sorted other free-willers. We then ask in response, were the actions of Eglon and his mercenaries any less sin if God suffered it than if He had predestinated it? If every acceptable word in our language was used to explain this incident they could still not change the fact that God strengthened Eglon to slay great numbers of the families of Israel, and they did it in a most sinful way.

If our enemies desire to harangue us with novel interpretations wrongly derived from the scriptures to prove that “...the Lord hath not [hath not really done it, they say] done it” but rather, Eglon was only an instrument to fulfill divine justice against a disobedient people, then may we not reverse the situation between the two nations and say that Israel’s conduct in departing from God was only His instrument to also finally bring evil upon Eglon and Moab? Could we not say, as our opponents have, what Israel did was but the bringing of evil upon the foes of the Lord? Is it not absurd to reason against the clear word of testimony? We shall not go farther afield, but return to Naomi and Ruth.

How the Lord Visited His people.

“For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.” As before noted, most of the time Israel served under the Judges was time of distress and suffering. There were some few good times; times of rest. Most of the time was, however, spent in duress under the cruel hand of various oppressors sent on them by Jehovah. When Naomi heard this good news it must have carried with it something of far greater value to her than another temporary respite from the oppressions so common. We are persuaded that the news of Boaz being blessed of God to harvest crops in abundance was what so stirred Naomi. It is certainly not accidental that just as soon as the account of Naomi and Ruth arriving at Beth-lehem is given we are told that “Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.” It is not difficult to feel that if news reached Naomi in the country of Moab that God had visited Israel with bread that there would also be mention of how. Boaz was no Gideon thrashing wheat behind a wine press. Nor was he the least in Israel. This was a mighty man of wealth. And he was a kinsman of Elimelech!

Surely Naomi knew the law of the kinsman redeemer. She was a sufficiently dutiful Israelite that Ruth was influenced by her conduct to long for Naomi’s people and Naomi’s God. Ruth knew nothing else of them than the living testimony of Naomi. Neither is it probable that this wandering woman, Naomi, would have been nearly so ready to return to Beth-lehem had Boaz not been a near-kinsman.

“All speculation!” some may say. We think not. We have fully demonstrated all the myriad circumstances that lead us to conclude that the how God visited His people was the raising up Boaz, a Mighty man of wealth, and a near-kinsman of Naomi and Ruth. One thing above all others must be kept in mind. There was a child predestinated to be born that would be called Obed, the grandfather of king David. David was both a type and an ancestor of Jesus the Christ and his very existence hinged on the union of Boaz and Ruth. The union of Boaz and Ruth hung on Naomi being sufficiently influenced by the news of how God had visited His people in giving them bread. Naomi could not know all that would transpire, but she could know that a distinct possibility existed that Boaz, a near kinsman, may be gracious and raise up the family of Elimelech from the dead through Ruth the Moabite. It was, after all, the order and practice among the 12 tribes to do just that. No matter what conclusions we, or others, may come to, this one thing is certain; it all came to pass to the fulfilling of the eternal will and purpose of God, which is the same as saying it was all predestinated. Lacking better evidence, we rest on the

sweet truth of God's ordination of all things; all things without exception, to bring to pass His perfect will and purpose to save His people from their sins by His Holy Child Jesus, who descended directly from Ruth and Boaz. We believe that is sufficient reason for believing God had sweetly wooed Naomi home with the hope of a kinsman redemption through Boaz, her near kinsman. So, finally, after those many bitter years of wandering from the fold, she returns from Moab with news of how God had visited His people. He had raised up Boaz, a mighty man of wealth.

Should the Lord be pleased, we shall view the subject again in another article. In that article we hope to review some of the many benefits that accrued to Ruth as a result of returning to the home of Naomi. We shall also see the amazing manner in which she found herself in the field of Boaz gleaning among the sheaves, her attitude and demeanor, and the great affection shown her by Boaz.

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RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued from No. 9)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

In our previous articles from the Book of Ruth we have attempted to show the many details and various circumstances that led to Ruth following after Naomi, her mother-in-law, to Beth-lehem-judah from Moab. All these diverse details and circumstances we attributed to the predestination of God. Had they not been predestinated we would be confronted with calculating the astronomical odds of chance bringing to pass the purpose of God in our text at the heading. As before noted, Ruth and Boaz were to be the parents of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David the King. Since Jesus our Lord is often declared in Scriptures to be the seed of David (Romans 1.3,4), we cannot believe our God would leave such vital matters to chance. Neither do we have to.

We hope now to describe some few of the many benefits or blessings Ruth received after coming home with Naomi. These benefits also, as were the events that brought her to Naomi's home, were ordered in the wise purposes of our God, but we shall for this article place most of our emphasis on the results rather than the plan. We find these benefits in Ruth, chapter 2. A complete exposition, while desirable, is not at this time practical.

The Kinsman

“And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz (Ruth 2.1).” One circumstance we have only briefly mentioned is God's sparing the life of Naomi. Her husband and two sons died and were buried in Moab; their benighted sojourn ended there. Naomi, however, was spared their sad end, and clearly for good reason. Boaz, this mighty man of wealth, was a kinsman to the family through Elimelech directly, and through Naomi only by her being the wife of Elimelech. With all the family now dead but for Naomi it seems clear that she had been spared to lead her son's widow, Ruth, to the divinely appointed rendezvous; otherwise the poor young widow, Ruth, would have been left to shuffle for herself. It is very probable that Ruth, without the influence of Naomi, would not have considered going to Beth-lehem-judah if she had been left alone. The role of Naomi, laid out by the hand of God to bring Ruth to Boaz, who would “raise up the name of the dead (Ruth 4.10),” was just as critical as any other event, great or small; thus all the details were predetermined to assure Ruth's final arrival at the field of Boaz.

Boaz, as we have learned, was a mighty man of wealth. How, are we to suppose, in that time of near constant servitude and oppression of Israel did Boaz attain this position of prominence and wealth? And, moreover, how did Boaz attain the unique station to raise up the name of the dead, to gain such rare posture among the feeble families of Israel, if not by God? Not many years after this period Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was empowered to utter the very words that in part explains it all. “The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor,

and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up (I Samuel 2.6,7).” Surely the Lord had taken the lives (killeth) of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, effectively removing their names from the tribes of Israel. However, through Boaz He would also make their name to live again. The name of the family of Elimelech had been brought down to the grave, yet the Lord would bring it up again. (Notice bringeth down and bringeth up. See Psalm 139.8ff) As well do we see that the Lord had made poor this wandering family, yet would make them rich through Boaz. He had brought them low and then lifted them up to heights not imaginable. Dare any say this was no more than an afterthought with God?

Yes; despite the ravings of free willers, God removed the lives of Elimelech and his two sons and at the same time placed Boaz in a position to fulfill the part of a kinsman. As the name of the family had, under God’s superintendence, gone down to the grave, even so, under the same superintendence, would God raise it up in Boaz having a son by Ruth, the eligible widow. Just as the Lord had sent a famine some years earlier, the event that moved the family of Naomi to travel to Moab, thereby making them poor, now He blessedly raises up (maketh rich) Boaz. All things necessary to qualify him for the part of kinsman were as surely put in place by the hand of God as were the stars of heaven fixed in their orbits. And, as we hope to shortly see, Boaz was tempered to be just the compassionate character to extend all necessary favors to Ruth in due time.

Ruth’s new life

“And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech (Ruth 2.2,3).” It is not straining the text to say that had Ruth been as some widows (I Timothy 5.3-15) she might just as well have been content to live off of Naomi’s generosity. Rather, having been the very woman God would bless to bear a son in the royal line of Christ, she was a diligent woman; one that would seek to labor according to good custom and practice. There is with Ruth no “Must I go?” but rather she pleads, “Let me now go.” Surely the ways of God in preparing all His people is past finding out.

Moreover, Ruth seeks to glean after him “in whose sight I shall find grace.” Even in that dark period of Israel’s occupation of the land of promise “a great light shined in darkness.” While many of Israel, Ruth’s late husband included, paid little heed to grace, it was among the first words to fall from her lips in her new life. We need not explain to the enlightened family of God where the widow Ruth learned of grace. Glorious grace, the favor of God to His chosen people, and this Moabite stranger has already learned the word and its application.

“And she went, and came.” Ruth went out, not having any guide but faith in being led to the source of grace, and she surely was not disappointed in her expedition. She not only went; she came. The path of this just one was as the shining light; it shined more and more... (Proverbs 4.18). Could we really expect more for Ruth’s adventure at that time? Having grace as a goal, she surely would come to that expected end, and so she did.

“...and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.” The word hap only occurs once in the Bible; it is here applied to Ruth. Most Bible readers know the word means accident or fortune according to Strong’s Concordance, and we cannot, nor do we desire to, controvert the meaning. Does this then give the lie to all we have previously said concerning predestination? Not at all; it rather lends support to it. Ruth did not accidentally come

directly to the field of Boaz, nor was it a matter of good fortune, as regards the purpose of God. The text says it was her hap; it was not another's. We may safely conclude that what was purely accident or fortune from the viewpoint of man, was as certain to transpire as if Ruth had gone directly to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. So firmly are we convicted that those dear saints of God that have been brought by mercy and grace to trust in Him alone for all the events of life regard all the haps of their sojourn to be ordered of the Lord that nothing more needs be added by us here. Ruth's hap was God's blessed will for her to go directly to the field of Boaz. So she did.

Boaz and Ruth together

“And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee (Verse 4).”

All the events and circumstances in the lives of both Ruth and Boaz up to this time culminate at this point in the field of Boaz. This was precisely what all the heavenly preparations had come to; the appointed meeting of the future parents of Obed and ultimately our Lord Jesus Christ. Who, among the children of men, could have possessed either the power, wisdom, or will necessary to have brought these two together? Further, who could have even imagined that these two, in particular Ruth, belonged in the royal line of Christ's ancestors? It is not probable, had human planning or effort been involved, that Ruth the Moabitess would have been selected for this position of great honor.

But, if sufficient searching be done, there is little likelihood that Boaz would have been selected by anyone either. Boaz certainly was not the product of parentage we might think fitting for so honorable a mission in bringing the Son of God into the world. That his father was a person of some prominence we cannot deny; but what of his mother, from whose womb Boaz was to come? Was she a woman likely to be considered fit for prominence in the royal line? “And Salmon begat Booz [Boaz] of Rachab [Rahab]; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth and Obed begat Jesse. (Matthew 1.5).” Rahab, of Jericho, fame was the mother of Boaz. And what of the character of Rahab? She was, among other things, a citizen of cursed Jericho, a harlot (Joshua 2.1), and a liar (Joshua 2.4-6).

It is not our intention to disparage the woman, for she was, after all, a blessed recipient of the same grace that cleanses all redeemed sinners. What we are rather showing is, normal human reasoning would likely pass her by for some other more suitable maiden; one more adapted to our carnal reasoning. But God's ways – they are past finding out.

“Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, whose damsel is this (Ruth 2.5)?” It is worthy of considerable attention that Ruth was not seeking after Boaz, neither was she displaying herself for any consideration other than being accepted as a lawful gleaner. However, she did come to the attention of the master of the field, Boaz. Observe too that Boaz did not go to her directly, even though he showed more than a passing interest; he rather asked his appointed servant for information as to the circumstances of this new gleaner. Surely glimpses of our spiritual Boaz, Jesus the Lord, may be seen here. It was the master of the field, not the poverty-stricken stranger that did the first seeking. The ancient prophet declared this truth thusly: “...I am found of them that sought me not (Isaiah 65.1).”

The impeccable character of Boaz is evident in his earnest, but cautious question, “Whose damsel is this?” While the Scriptures abound with records of vile conduct by those in authority, Boaz shines as an exception to such unholiness toward those under their authority. Boaz did not act as did David when he saw Bathsheba on the roof-top, and committed a series of atrocities to gain her favors. Rather, he seeks to learn her identity before considering any other avenues. “Whose damsel is this?” surely speaks

volumes about Boaz. We feel it as well speaks much of how God prepares His chosen vessels for their appointed end. Boaz, the complete man and master, was nothing more than the finished product of the eternal will of our all-wise God.

It is very probable that upon seeing this lovely damsel and learning her identity (Verses 6, 7) that Boaz was made to reflect upon the trials and rescue of his own mother, Rahab, who was herself a stranger and an alien until united to his father, Salmon. The knowledge of those things that befell his mother would surely have had some strong influence on him at this time, thus showing again how even our disposition in any given circumstance is fashioned by the wise appointments of God in the lives of even our kin. We are fully persuaded that none but rank free-willers and God-haters could deny the superintending government of our God in every detail of our lives. If this is not absolute predestination it is absolute nothing.

“Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens (Ruth 2.8).” What a wonderful figure of Christ does Boaz here portray. He speaks to Ruth first of all of hearing! It is the voice of her new master commanding her to hear! He owns her attention with, “my daughter.” Just so, the first work of our Lord with us is His voice calling us to hear Him, and none other. (The sheep do hear; they know His voice, not intellectually, but spiritually, and they, from the first moment of hearing Him, can never follow another.) Then Boaz sweetly directs Ruth to “Go not...but abide here fast...” Two blessed injunctions: go not – abide. Those of the living family that have heard the Lord say “Abide in me” know much of how Ruth must have felt naturally that happy day. She was experiencing in nature just what the saints of the Most High experience in grace when the True Vine associates His branches with Himself by revelation. It must be noted, however, that with Ruth, she was directed to “abide here” while the Lord calls his branches to “abide in.” The distinction becomes clear when it is remembered that as yet, at that moment, Ruth and Boaz had not become one by union, whereas when Christ spoke to the living saints they had been united from eternity.

After receiving other sweet instructions from Boaz, Ruth reacted in a manner consistent with the temperament God had given her for the occasion. “Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger (Ruth 2.10)?” This was no wanton woman one would expect to find coming from an heathen land. Ruth had none of that arrogance found in many fallen women; she fell on her face; she bowed herself to the ground! No seducing gestures; no suggestive actions! Ruth acted in a fashion complementing the actions of those in the company of the Master of all fields, our Lord Himself.

It might be argued that all this proves nothing. “Many may have done the same if given the opportunity,” our objectors will say. But may and if prove nothing. The facts are, this is what Ruth did, and if eternity was at our disposal to argue the point it could not be proved that Ruth could have done anything other than what she did. Neither could it be proved that others could have done the same, for they did not. May we be content to rejoice in the record and leave Arminian speculation to their tribes of followers. Does not the whole of the history of Ruth to this point clearly show that God had fashioned every detail of her ordinary life to bring her to this very extraordinary moment? If not another soul on earth feels so, this poor writer is moved to acknowledge the power, wisdom and purpose of God in prostrating Ruth before Boaz. She could have dislodged the very throne of God as

soon as she could have done other than fall down before Boaz, for impending union of the two was ordained in heaven.

And what of the first words to humbly, and probably tremblingly, exit from Ruth's lips? Most will surely recognize them as being very similar to those they uttered when first they fell before our Lord and Master. "Why have I found grace in thine eyes?" Oh! Why? Why me, dear Lord, a fallen sinner from this sin-cursed land, have I found grace? Let those who trust in creature merits ponder the words of Ruth. Is there a trace of self assurance or sense of worthiness in this Moabite? None whatever. Ruth is astounded that the very one that possessed the field where she sought crumbs would stoop to show her favor. To even pause to acknowledge her was sufficient to cause her to marvel. Reader, do you see yourself here?

"Why have I found grace in thine eyes?" Is not this just what took place when God delivered Noah from his wicked surroundings and placed him in the ark, there to be secure from the coming deluge? Yes, as Noah found grace, so have all others designated to be spared. This Ruth saw at once and thus proclaimed, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes?" She knew her condition. She did not deserve favor, but nevertheless she found it and was astounded. While some few have falsely suggested that we should never question God, as Ruth did Boaz, we consider their suggestion fully out of place. It is not that poor sinners question God's authority, wisdom, grace or mercy, for none called by a divine calling dare to act so, but they most certainly do question "why me?"

"Why have I found grace in thine eyes?" Many an amazed sinner has tortured their minds with a why me, Lord, but to that curious inquiry it must be responded why not me? The question why me implies that maybe the Lord has seen more worthiness in us than we had imagined. Be assured; there is no worthiness or merit in a single son or daughter of Adam. We answer the query why me with one word: choice. God has been gracious to whom He will be gracious. Any grace, or lack of grace, sinners receive or do not receive, is based on choice – God's choice – and not because of the character, good or bad, either of them may possess. One example of this can be found in comparing Paul and Judas. Could Judas say, "why me" because he was a devil from the beginning? No; and neither could Paul say "why me" because he was called to be the mighty apostle to the Gentiles. We, like they, must say why not me for the matter is resolved in the solemn words of our Lord, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight (Matthew 11.26)." If we are called to trials may we be blessed to say and feel, why not me, for surely the Lord does all things well. Conversely, if we are called to rich blessings, such as Ruth felt herself to receive from Boaz, may we also be blessed to say why not me, for blessings and trials alike come from the hand of our all wise God. Why not me is only another way of saying, "Not my will, but thine be done."

We leave the subject for now with the anticipation that we may be blessed to return to it again. Being so blessed, the response from Boaz to Ruth's questions and their further companionship will be examined.

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Number 11

RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued from No. 10)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

Our last article concluded with Boaz and Ruth meeting for the first time. Ruth had gone out to “glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace (Ruth 2.2).” Nor was she disappointed. God led her directly to the field of Boaz as surely as He calls the sun to rise in the East. This is no bold assumption. It could not have been otherwise, for Ruth and Boaz were to be the parents of a son, Obed, who was to be numbered in the family of Abraham, David, and Jesus the Christ.

Ruth was still young enough to bear children and it is probable she was sufficiently attractive in appearance to draw to her the eye of Boaz. Her deportment and public conduct was also such that she would not repel prospective suitors. Despite years of grief and widowhood, coupled with the weariness of the recent journey from Moab, Ruth was yet ambitious and strong enough to set out to whatever field the grace of God would bring her. Thus she finds herself in a surprising, yet profitable, conversation with Boaz, the proprietor of the field wherein she began to glean. Faith of the least measure could not fail to see in all these seeming incidental events the very hand of God bringing to pass His will and purpose. It would not be amiss to say Ruth was fashioned by our heavenly Potter to be exactly what she was, and when she was, as well. This lovely vessel of mercy had been prepared, beginning in the mind and purpose of God, continuing on in her birth and existence in Moab, her removal to Beth-lehem, to that very day, in every detail to be perfectly suited for the affections of Boaz. There was not the least possibility of her failing to fully win his affections. Moreover, the record fully supports this view; she surely did win over Boaz.

Boaz did not, at that time, know Ruth, but he did know some few things about her – things that stirred him to inquire further. He had no sooner arrived at his fields than he asked his servant, “whose damsel is this?” The servant informed Boaz that she was “the Moabitish damsel who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab (Ruth 2.6).” Afterwards, when Ruth asked him why she had found grace in his eyes, this great master of the field apprises her of the extent to which his interest had carried him. The awareness Boaz had of Ruth’s conduct and activities were unfolded to her in noble tones. “And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore (Ruth 2.11).”

When Naomi and Ruth returned to Beth-lehem from Moab it is recorded “that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi (Ruth 1.19)?” By simple calculation we learn that Boaz was not present among the crowd or he would not have asked about Ruth when she began to glean in his field. He may have known about her but he did not know who she was until informed. Boaz did not remain uninformed long though, for as mentioned above, he answered Ruth with, “it hath been fully shewed me, all that thou hast done...” indicating he was very well apprised of her character and

decorum. There is nothing to indicate that the servant of Boaz “fully shewed” him all Ruth had done, and in the brief time between the conversation with his servant and his interview of Ruth, Boaz did not seemingly have an opportunity to converse with others at length about these events. If his trusted servant could supply only limited intelligence, how can it possibly be expected that the daily gleaners in the field of Boaz would be aware of much more personal data involving Ruth? So then, where did Boaz suddenly obtain such detailed information regarding this lovely Moabite maiden – the woman soon to become his wife and the mother of his son?

“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord (Proverbs 16.1).” In the Old Testament we find numerous accounts of God revealing His will to those chosen for specific goals. Particular examples can be found in the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, Hannah, Elijah, Elisha, many of the kings and prophets and countless others. It should not be strange then to accept the evidence we have – the knowledge Boaz had relating to Ruth most probably came directly from God. And why not? Surely God had prepared the heart of this mighty man of wealth to feel affection and growing attachment toward Ruth. Can we believe God would predestinate the birth of Obed and leave all the necessary emotional inclinations of Boaz towards Ruth to his momentary whims? Moreover, when she asked why she had found grace in his eyes, Boaz had a ready answer of the tongue. He could tell her in positive language that “it had been fully shown him.” The meaning of the word fully conveys to us the suggestion that God only could fully show Boaz these things.

“So what; do not young men and women meet all the time and fall in love?” the reader asks. Yes, indeed they do, and this is exactly why we go into such detail in this beautiful story. We hope to show that this is not simply an ordinary meeting of prospective lovers. The evidence has thus far been overwhelming. God predestinated and controlled the myriad events to the last detail that brought Ruth to Boaz and brought Boaz to desire Ruth. The calculated odds that all these details could simply fall together as random happenings and then accomplish what God could accomplish, with nothing more than His will, are beyond discovery. Although none can believe it but those blessed by God, the evidence is there for all to acknowledge. Every needful matter, great or small, significant or obscure, common or rare, was fitted by the eternal will of Him Who cannot do wrong to bring to pass the union of two total strangers from dramatically different backgrounds. For what? Among other things, so that this child Obed, of the royal line of Christ, might be born. Nothing could fail, and only predestination could insure the coming to pass of each event. And – it may be added – nothing did fail.

If it be admitted then that God brought this union to pass, just as He eternally predestinated it, why then would it be thought a thing incredible for God to do so in other cases? If in other cases, then why not all cases? Rather than this being a doctrine fraught with puzzling difficulties, this is sweet food for the soul of every heaven-taught child of the everlasting kingdom. This holy truth is a sure ballast for our little ship when we are tossed about on the troubled sea of life. Even the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar was compelled to attest to this universal rule of our most high God in matters great and small. Hear him – just as God taught him: “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou (Daniel 4.35)?”

Balaam too saw as much when he would hire himself out to Balak and curse the children of Israel. It was soon enough made clear to him that God, and God alone, determines the course of all events, past and present, great and small, good and evil, and that there is no divination against the will of God. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and

shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good (Numbers 23.19)?” If then God is pleased to reveal such profound truths to the wicked of this world, how much more shall His elect be enlightened in these ways of eternal providence? And do not these truths afford us much comfort when contemplating such affairs as the weaving together the untold number of needful details to bring Ruth and Boaz together? Do they not afford us the same soul comfort when thought is given respecting all other unions of all other men and women? The Spirit-applied understanding of the predestination of all things both calms the troubled breast and fills the soul with humbling praise to Him Who doeth all things well. May He bless us to pause and say, “Oh, joy!”

Boaz told Ruth, “It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.” In our last article we mentioned that Boaz must surely have reflected on his own mother, Rahab, when encountering Ruth, the Moabite stranger. Like Ruth, Rahab too had forsaken her native land and dwelt among a people she had not known previously. Ruth, however, had lost even more. The husband of her youth was dead; her sister-in-law, Orpah, declined to sojourn with her and Naomi; her land of nativity, her gods, and her family were now but memories of the past. Besides all this, Ruth was reduced to gleaning among the sheaves in hope of daily bread. Surely all this affected Boaz. Clearly it did, but this must be examined a bit closer.

Why should we assume, simply because Boaz did become drawn to Ruth that her circumstances and character were the cause? Many a poor girl has been in similar straits and found no favor. Rather, they are often exploited. No! Boaz was drawn to Ruth, just as she was, because God had eternally willed it to be so. Lovely as it may be to ponder, this was no “one-in-a-million” deal Ruth happened to fall into. This was nothing other than the fulfillment of the path Ruth and Boaz were appointed to walk in, as expressed by Ryland:

Sovereign Ruler of the skies!
Ever gracious, ever wise!
All my times are in thy hand, –
All events at thy command.

His decree, who form’d the earth,
Fix’d my first and second birth:
Parents, native place, and time, -
All appointed were by him.

Simply stated, Ruth had asked a question: “Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?” The answer of Boaz to this plain question was equally plain: “It hath been fully shewed me.” Unless God had fully shewed Boaz, where could he have learned the many details he did to give this plain answer with such force and firm conviction? May we be blessed to raise our Ebenezer here, for surely, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us” to see His predestinating hand.

Ruth responds

“Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens

(Ruth 2.13).” The contents of this descriptive supplication abound with spiritual parallels well known to the children of God. Ruth begins her response pleading for favor. She does not plead in the manner of the Ashdod tongue. This is language the saints of God love to hear – all of them have used it themselves. We may well be wary of those who come among us with any other tune in their mouths. Those brought low, as was Ruth, can raise their pitch no higher than an humble petition for favor. There is nothing of justice or merit in their hearts or voices. “Favor, my Lord” is the anthem of the redeemed. May we ever rejoice in the clear sounds of the voice of truth, for it sounds forth the melodies of heaven itself.

“For that thou hast comforted me.” Blessed it is when the pilgrims and strangers bound for the land of promise find comfort. Having once experienced the favor of Boaz, Ruth would plead for more, for she was thereby comforted. Likewise, when sheep are made to lie down in green pastures, they find the rod and staff of the good Shepherd to comfort them. Those like Ruth, travelers from a distant land, are greatly humbled when they are favored with comforts, but true comforts come only from Him whom the Lord has appointed to be our comforter. None of Ruth’s fellow-gleaners could have spoken words of comfort to her soul that Boaz expressed had they employed the words of the combined languages of the world for days on end.

“For that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid.” No harsh rebuffs; no terse commands from Boaz. Ruth is not staggered by a gaggle of “do this” and “don’t do that” language commonly uttered by the ordinary taskmasters of this world. Boaz’s initial words to the newly-arrived gleaner were warm, consoling, and inviting. The voice of Boaz also carried the feelings of his heart to Ruth’s ear as clearly as a thousand pictures. It has often been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but who can deny the transporting feelings contained in just a brief but friendly comment? When our Lord speaks “peace be still” to our hearts we need not seek further evidence to be satisfied of the friendly gesture. This was the manner Boaz employed with Ruth, and to borrow from a current expression, “She got the picture.”

“Though I be not like unto one of thine handmaids.” Ruth was well aware she was different. She dared not compare herself to those of longstanding in the field of Boaz. Surely the Lord had adorned her with the suitable garments of a lowly and meek stranger. Neither was she ashamed of those garments or reluctant to confess her sincere feelings. She had no aspirations beyond the favors of the master of the field. Who, when reading this simple Bible story, can fail to see in Ruth the distinguishing marks of the work of grace? Few of the saints of God will fail to see in her confession much of their personal feelings as well. Like Ruth, those born of the Spirit know much more of what they are not than what they are. They know they are not like others and could not be if they desired. As the hymn pointedly expresses the inmost feelings of redeemed sinners:

I am a stranger here below,
And what I am tis hard to know;

Boaz further instructs Ruth, and his servants as well, concerning her welfare. Ruth finishes out the day gathering barley from among the sheaves and the handfuls of purpose. It is not difficult to believe she also gleaned considerable from her new-found store house of pleasant emotions. She had probably not experienced such feelings for many years. When the day was past, Ruth returns to the city and her mother-in-law, Naomi. We leave for another article the matters that passed between them upon Ruth’s return. We expect, the Lord willing, to further amplify on the kinsman-redeemer and how Boaz fulfilled

that position. Here we sum up briefly one aspect of the many events vital to the coming together of Boaz and Ruth, the parents of Obed.

All of the human family trace their progenitors back to Adam and Eve. Thus, if either Adam or Eve, or both of them, had, for whatever reason, died before bearing children, what must have become of us? The answer is simple yet fundamental: we would not, we could not, exist; not if our lineage began with Adam and Eve. It requires no spiritual wisdom to comprehend the consequences of any failure on the part of our first parents to bear children. None of us could have ever been born had there been a failure respecting the initial births in the human family. Happily, we learn from the Word of God that our heavenly Father had willed the certainty of the birth of every member of the human family. “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1.28).”

It is clear to us that there can be no real dispute here. If the development of the human family depends on the success of its first parents to bear children then there is also a vital dependence of equal proportion in every subsequent branch of the family that began in Adam and Eve. For example: had Esau succeeded in his plot to kill Jacob. then where would that leave those we call the twelve tribes of Israel? Answer: they could not have existed. The line of Jacob would have been cut off – interrupted and destroyed – even before it began. Even so if there was any interruption, of any sort, in either of the branches of Adam’s family that produced Boaz or Ruth, the obvious consequences would be the impossibility of their births. What then of Obed? He could not have been born if a single link in the family chain was broken. So then all that God had purposed in Obed hinges on everything that could possibly affect his ultimate birth. On and on we might go into the infinite number of events either directly or indirectly involved in bringing this one child into the world. For our limited capabilities, the field is endless. Think of it! Only one so-called untimely death, for whatever reason, and the whole plan of God would be impeded. May He be praised that His glorious predestination secures the whole of these earthly events – from the first to the last. This is so fundamental it is difficult to think that anyone could question it, but they do – if not actually then by faulty deductions.

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Number 12

RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued from No. 11)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

In concluding our last article, No.11, in this series, we noted how Ruth had been gleaning in the fields of Boaz shortly after arriving from her long journey out of her native land, Moab. (Besides gleaning barley in the fields of Boaz, she gleaned amply as well of his benevolence.) At day’s end, after having beaten out that which she had gleaned in the field of Boaz, Ruth returned to the city and her mother-in-law, Naomi. The blessed work of God in surely bringing to pass His eternal purpose for Ruth and Boaz was now fast proceeding. God’s plan for Ruth and Boaz was taking more visible shape. But God never hurries. The imposing events that soon would transpire had been centuries in the making and would each unfold in the order and time that God had before ordered.

Pause and wonder, dear reader, at the perfect plan of God. May it be remembered, this series of articles aim at contemplating the predestination of all things, from the beginning of the Bible to the end. Other events related to Ruth and Boaz are worthy of contemplation, but we can view nothing so vast, so beyond expression than the eternal purposes of our all-wise God. This we call absolute predestination. We are writing of predestination that knows no limits. If it occurs or exists, it is embraced in the absolute predestination of our God Who is too wise to err. This is the basis of our study in Ruth as well as the rest of the books of the Bible.

When Ruth relates to Naomi where she had gleaned that day the response of Naomi was enthusiastic: “And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen (Ruth 2.20).” Though absent from the life in Israel for many years, Naomi had not forgotten the commandments of God regulating their lives. Much like a reviving fire in her soul, Naomi felt joy in the words of Ruth. Moreover, she saw in those seeming fortuitous events a warm ray of reviving hope; hope for both her and Ruth. Boaz, this mighty man of wealth, was a near kinsman of theirs and had not left off his kindness to both the living and the dead of the family of Elimelech. Thus Naomi interpreted the kindness of Boaz, and with good cause. Since Boaz was a kinsman, one of their next kinsman, then there was a renewed hope for the family. Naomi clearly believed all those sudden events would fall out for the good of her decimated family and that the name of Elimelech would by Boaz once again be raised up.

What then would be the outcome of the potential involvement between Boaz and Ruth? Redemption! Ruth would be redeemed, along with all that pertained to her union in the family of Elimelech. Boaz would be the redeemer – the near kinsman redeemer. Together they illustrate the eternal plan of God in its execution for the redemption of all His family through our kinsman Redeemer, Jesus Christ the Lord.

The Kinsman in Israel

“And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger’s family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: Either his uncle, or his uncle’s son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself (Leviticus 25.47-49).”

This passage is the chief source for the topic of a kinsman-redeemer. It is, no doubt, the very commandment of God that swiftly entered the mind of Naomi when Ruth related to her the encounter in the field of Boaz.

It may seem strange, however, that there are only two instances recorded in the Scriptures where the kinsman-redeemer right of redemption was employed by the Israelites, and, moreover, the concept of New Covenant redemption was not clearly in evidence in either. And, too, when we examine the New Testament record of what we call redemption, the redemption there seems considerably different to what is recorded in Leviticus 25. When we are reminded that many passages of the Old Testament take on a much more expanded and lucid meaning in the New Testament, then most of our perceived confusion disappears. As has been said long before us, “The Old Testament concealed; The New Testament revealed.” This appears to be the case with kinsman-redemption.

Much has been written and preached about the kinsman-redeemer, particularly as it is seen in the book of Ruth. Often more confusion than instruction was the result. There is little in the Bible, however, to correspond with Leviticus 25.47-49. But we do have sufficient in the record of Boaz redeeming Ruth to fill out the figure. It gives us a full and complete picture of what was recorded by Moses. In the book of Ruth we see Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer who is typical of Christ our Lord. The types and shadows in the book of Ruth become reality in the New Testament portrayal of our redemption. There we see, not the picture of which Moses wrote, but the reality.

Before viewing the reality of redemption, as seen in the New Testament, or the picture of it in the book of Ruth, we must look at several of the vital parameters from Leviticus 25. First and foremost in the Leviticus record is the kinship factor. The plan of redemption, as recorded in Leviticus, was not instituted for all the nations of the earth, nor the individuals that make them up. No; the price of redemption was to be paid only for brethren among the tribes of Israel. “and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor...(Leviticus 25.47).” Thus both the person to be redeemed and the person to do the redeeming must be kin. For example, an Egyptian could not redeem an Israelite, nor could an Israelite redeem an Egyptian.

It may be suggested then that there could be no redemption for Ruth by Boaz for she was a Moabite, not an Israelite. True, they were not blood kin, but this seeming difficulty will readily be resolved in due time, the Lord willing. A second factor in the Old Testament redemption was, the one that was to redeem was to be nigh of kin – of his family. It would not do to plead for a redemptive transaction beyond those of nigh kin, meaning one who was an uncle or cousin or similar relationship. Should it be asked where the line was drawn we confess that this is all we can learn of the matter. Nigh of kin appears to mean close relatives, not those of only distant or somewhat vague ties.

A third consideration was the right of one to redeem himself – if he be able. This is of paramount significance. Surely there could be none closer by way of kinship than one’s self. But close kinship does not necessarily mean ability to redeem, especially as we examine the redemption of the soul. It

must not be overlooked, however, that the right or privilege of self-redemption did exist. This too will be examined later, in due course.

All these specific regulations were set forth in the Old Testament as typical of our redemption and suggest to us a great truth. That great truth is this: where there are regulations there is a regulator. God is the supreme regulator. Unless, of course, you mistakenly think God randomly throws out to us rules and regulations at a whim, then leaves us to scarp after them as a dog would a bone. The redemption of Leviticus 25 was decidedly a particular redemption regulated by God. As before noted, it was only for the families of Israel, and none others. Particular redemption means the redeemer was confined to redeeming certain or specific classes of individuals. These classifications were determined, not by the Israelites, but God. God made these determinations long before Moses wrote them down and delivered them to the twelve tribes. Surely none dare dispute this simple fact. Yet they do! Why do some (really, most) dispute this? Because – an admission here is an admission of predestination – a doctrine most surely hated by all but those Jesus, our Boaz, redeems. God had a plan for old Israel to follow in redeeming their brethren, a plan which was typical of the New Covenant plan of redemption. Can it be believed that the old plan, or the new plan, might be full of contingencies or variables that might alter the will of God? Predestination precludes contingencies and variables. If the redemption given to old Israel was planned in advance (another way of saying it was predestinated), and it was typical of the New Covenant redemption, then the New Covenant plan must also be predestinated, else it could not fulfill the typical plan. To illustrate this with a mathematical certainty, two plus two must always equal four.

Thus, Israel had a kinsman-redemption provided for them by Jehovah. Boaz would fulfill the pattern by redeeming all the properties of Elimelech, his deceased kin, taking Ruth the widow of Elimelech's son to be his wife, begetting a son, Obed, and so be the clearest type of our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus, in the whole of the Old Testament. All of this would typify the spiritual Redemption that is in Christ our Redeemer. Every detail, great or small, that was woven together bringing to pass the redemption of Elimelech's properties were dependent on a power to bring them to fit in the design that could only be found in the will and purpose of God. We sternly state that no one that ever lived could produce an alternative system or method to bring to pass such an involved series of events and circumstances.

Beginnings of Ruth's Redemption

Interesting as it may be, and spiritually profitable as well, it is not our purpose to analyze all the above mentioned details involving the redemption of Ruth the Moabitess by Boaz the Israelite. Certain facts must, however, be examined so that a clearer picture of the predestinated redemption of the elect may shine forth from this brief book called Ruth.

First among those facts is the necessity of the redeemer to be willing to redeem. From the account in Leviticus 25 there is nothing to suggest that the near of kin was legally responsible to redeem – only that it was his privilege if he so chose. Boaz was certainly willing to fulfill his privileged office of redeemer, yet there was an obstacle of incalculable proportions that could have possibly thrown the whole of this proposed redemption into confusion; there was a kinsman nearer than Boaz. The nearer kinsman's right to redeem must come first. Full well knowing this, Boaz addressed Ruth in a willing, but cautious, manner. "And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning (Ruth 3.12, 13)."

Boaz would do the part of a kinsman redeemer willingly, as he testified plainly before Ruth, provided the nearer kinsman would not. His oath was, “as the Lord liveth.” But – he was at that point not able to redeem. There was the prior privilege of the nearer kinsman to act as redeemer. As mentioned earlier, this was the obstacle that must first be removed. Since there was a kinsman that was nearer than Boaz, he must first be given the opportunity to fulfill the part of the kinsman-redeemer. If he consented, or was willing to do so, then Boaz must step aside, no matter that he was willing to redeem the estate of Elimelech and, in particular, take Ruth to be his bride and wife. But if the nearer kinsman was either unwilling or unable, or both, then the way would be clear for the union of Ruth and Boaz and the raising up the name of the dead by Boaz being the kinsman redeemer.

What part did Ruth play in this sorting out of proper redeemers? Could she rush out to plead her case with the nearer kinsman? Blessedly, she did not appear to even know who the fellow was, and if she had, she still had no basis for pleading. There was no room for emotions; the commandment of God respecting kinsman redemption must be carried out without deviation. Ruth could only sit by passively while Boaz undertook to plead for her.

It would seem improbable that any of the Lord’s tried children would fail to see the beauty of this simple situation and its resolution. Are not the most anxious of us helpless, completely and totally helpless, to hasten or further our spiritual redemption which is typified by Boaz redeeming Ruth? Must not we too sit still until we see how the matter will fall (Ruth 3.18)? Who among us would not make matters worse, if possible, rather than better, if we endeavored to assist whatever in our own redemption? The sage language of Naomi to Ruth is even for us today a powerful message to calm the restless and troubled soul: “Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day (Ruth 3.18).”

There are several points of great interest in the instructions of Naomi to Ruth. Foremost is the direction to “sit still.” Plain language, but vital. This injunction is contrary to all that comprises our human nature but perfectly complements that inward work of God we call our spiritual nature. Just as Moses implored the Israelites to “stand still” while even at that moment the mighty armies of Egypt were thundering down upon them, Naomi tells Ruth to “sit still.” The reason in both cases? Someone else will decide and undertake your case for you.

How long was Ruth to sit still? Until she knew how the matter would fall. It was not a matter of if, but of how! “The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.” Boaz, like Jesus whom he typified, could not enter into his rest until the work of redemption was finished. The multitude of saints that have found sweet comfort in the words of our Lord, “It is finished” are without number. Boaz would shortly be able to say “it is finished” as well, but not until he had removed every obstacle that might hinder Ruth from becoming his bride and companion.

If this was a secular drama rather than a factual Bible account it would certainly not be any more interesting and replete with intricate plots and equally complex sub-plots. The coming together of Ruth and Boaz is as gripping a story as may be found anywhere, in or out of the Bible. As before mentioned, the vast number of events, seemingly isolated and unimportant taken alone, have been woven together by the unerring hand of God to bring Ruth and Boaz to this climactic moment. The final (predestinated) events were as follows: Naomi gave Ruth instructions to sit still. Ruth awaited the outcome of the confrontation between Boaz and the nearer kinsman. Boaz took his place of office at the gate of the city, (Ruth 4.1). He summoned the nearer kinsman as he approached the city. And so, the outcome hung in the balance. But what if the nearer kinsman was a surly, ill tempered, jealous dolt? Suppose he had

been ignorant of the instructions of Leviticus 25, or just lazy and failed to show up on that particular morning. If all this matter was resting on the sand foundation of chance or luck, good or bad, or the unpredictable deportment of this nearer kinsman, then confusion and disappointment might have arisen – even at the turn of the next event. May our Lord be praised, however, for there was no danger or possibility of failure. Forever, from the incalculable ages past, the outcome was as sure as the unchangeableness and veracity of God Himself. None of this episode could possibly fall out any way except for the benefit of Ruth and Boaz, and the benefit of all that would follow from their loins to the end of time, just as God had eternally and absolutely predestinated.

We would once again remind the reader that Ruth was to bear a son. He would be named Obed, and would be the grandfather of David. Boaz was to be the father of Obed. Do any of the numberless sons of Adam possess the wisdom, individually or combined, to contrive some alternate system that would make these things certain except for the eternal predestination of God? And, we ask, despite all the malice and rage that has been hurled against the doctrine of predestination, was there anything wrong or sinful in God predestinating this grand event? Dare any charge God? Are any so hardened that they can demand of God, “What doest thou?” Has our God violated the supposed rights of men or angels, or even devils, in making certain before the time the birth of Obed, a link in the line of Jesus the Lord? We must ask with David, “Why do the heathen rage?” Cannot God do with His own as He pleases, and if He so pleases, cannot He purpose or predestinate from all eternity to do so? For our part, we had rather stand all alone in this world and have all manner of contempt hurled against us than join with those that despise the sweet, blessed, soul-comforting doctrine of the absolute predestination of all things. Especially since we read of it on every page of the Bible.

While it may be suggested by our opponents that we cannot find the actual word predestination on any pages of the Bible, much less all the pages, we would remind them of a true and accurate expression in current usage today: “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

The redemption transaction

“And he [Boaz] said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech’s: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it (Ruth 4.3,4).” It is well worth notice that Boaz confronts the nearer kinsman respecting Naomi, and not Ruth, for she was, after all, the widow of Elimelech, whose property was in default. There are similarities in this to the parable our Lord propounded to His disciples about the treasure hid in the field (Matthew 13.44). When the man in the parable (Jesus) found this treasure in the field, and joyfully sold all he had to obtain it, he purchased the field wherein was the treasure, and not the treasure directly. Even so, Boaz, when advertising the nearer kinsman about the squandered inheritance of Elimelech, proposes buying a parcel of land. Now, according to Ruth 4.3, Naomi was the agent selling the parcel of land, not Ruth. Ruth was the treasure hid in this field (parcel of land) that Boaz had his eye on, much as in the parable of the treasure hid in the field. But the property was traceable back to the original land-holder, Elimelech, by the hand of Naomi.

It should be obvious that whatever parcel of land was in question, it was nothing in comparison to the vast holdings of Boaz. He was, according to the account, a mighty man of wealth (Ruth 2.1) and would be but meagerly advantaged by the appropriation of this little parcel once held by his now-dead relative, Elimelech. Be sure of this – Boaz wanted the parcel of land because of the wondrous treasure

that accompanied it – Ruth. He did not, however, at the first notify the nearer kinsman of this jewel associated with the parcel of Elimelech.

As Boaz related the business at hand he makes it clear that there were but two eligible relatives of Elimelech capable of redemption; the nearer kinsman and Boaz himself. This will make our prospects of identifying the nearer kinsman much easier, if the Lord is pleased to lead us on.

Whoever this nearer kinsman was, and we hope to identify him in due time, he was willing enough to redeem the field of his departed brother, Elimelech, and so identified his intentions with a positive, “I will redeem it.” From the recitation of circumstances given by Boaz, the fellow had a perfect right to do so, even more so than Boaz. However, Boaz had more pertinent intelligence on the matter than that which the nearer kinsman had so readily accepted as agreeable terms. His willingness would speedily be turned into a decided unwillingness. His unwillingness flowed from a previously unknown lack of ability to redeem. It might be called a flaw in the heart and affections.

“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance (Ruth 4.5).” It has been often asserted, though mistakenly, that the nearer kinsman was bound by the regulations of Deuteronomy 25 to accept Ruth as his wife that the name of the dead be raised up but this is not so. A careful reading there will show that the regulations there pertained to actual brothers, and not simply to those called brothers by national ties. Furthermore, in the Deuteronomy account, it was the widowed wife that sought redress at the gate of the city, not the prospective kinsman-redeemer, such as Boaz.

It appears most likely that the stipulation that the kinsman-redeemer, whether Boaz or the nearer kinsman, marry Ruth to obtain the field (parcel of land) was a collaboration of Naomi and Boaz. Ruth most likely had too little knowledge of the customs of Israel to be directly involved. Neither was this improper or illegal. Naomi had the right, as widow of Elimelech, to draw up whatever price for the inheritance she thought the market might bear. A careful reading of both Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 25 will make it unmistakably clear that the Scriptures were not in the slightest violated. It must be admitted, however, that both Naomi and Boaz appeared to be relatively good “horse traders.” They did come from a family of “horse traders” as can be clearly seen in Abraham’s duplicity toward Pharaoh, (Genesis 12.17-20); Jacob’s deceiving his father Isaac (Genesis 27.19), his skinning uncle Laban out of the choice cattle, sheep, and goats (Genesis 30.31-43); Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah veiling herself to deceive him so that she might have a child by him. Zarah and Pharez, twin boys were the results. These are not all of the family we could mention, but we forebear.

Should the Lord bless us to follow this with another article we hope to honor our pledge to show how Ruth might be redeemed even though she was not an actual Israelite, and relate something more of the nearer kinsman and his right to redeem – if he be able.

The Remnant

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Number 13

RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued from No. 12)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

We have come, in this extended series of articles, to the culmination of events necessary to bring to pass the birth of Obed. Obed is the son referred to in our text at the heading of the page. The ordained manner by which Ruth was to become the mother, and Boaz the father, of this child Obed was kinsman-redemption. Boaz would take what steps were necessary to redeem all that his relation, Elimelech, had squandered. Among the treasures to be redeemed, along with the fields of Elimelech, was lovely Ruth the Moabite widow of Mahion, son of Elimelech.

We last observed Boaz at the gates of the city advertising the nearer kinsman (Ruth 4.4) of which he had previously mentioned to Ruth (Ruth 3.12). Knowing the law and the customs requisite to carrying out the redemption of a kinfolk's inheritance, Boaz followed all the necessary steps with care. Lest any might wonder what prompted Boaz to act so carefully, to follow every prescribed step to insure the proposed union with Ruth the Moabitess, the following Scripture should give a sufficient reason: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way (Psalms 37:23).” Boaz was doing precisely what God had from all eternity ordered be done. God's good plan would be executed without fail. Boaz walked in each and every step necessary to bring to pass the predestinated event; moreover, Boaz was well pleased to do so. He was made both willing and able in the day of God's power. We do not suggest that Boaz knew that all this was certainly predestinated. He most likely knew what ever came to pass was by God's purpose, but he surely did not know what that purpose was until it came to pass. Nor can we today.

Before finishing our review of the communication between Boaz and the nearer kinsman it seems useful to briefly survey Naomi's comments to Ruth when she was informed it was the field of Boaz where Ruth had been gleaning. Observe that in the following Naomi had no hesitation at all concerning what to tell Ruth: “Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor. Wash thy self therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do (Ruth 3:1-4).”

What was it Naomi desired for Ruth and forthwith instructed her about? Rest! Not simply physical rest, but that rest of once again leaning on the arm of a loving and protective husband and companion. Naomi perceived (based on the ancient customs of Israel) that with Boaz, Ruth, her daughter-in-law, could have these things and yet still be fully identified with the family of her husband and son, both now dead. Without that rest of which Naomi spoke Ruth must continue to exist and toil as a destitute

and foreign widow. She could not possibly expect any more than the common drudgery of a gleaner in the fields. Kinsman redemption would, however, change all that.

Naomi proceeded with instructions for Ruth to wash, anoint herself, put on suitable raiment, then go lay down at the feet of Boaz on his threshingfloor that night. Surely the directions given by Naomi are better than those given to us by the zeal-mongers of the Arminian tribes. Each step Ruth was to take vividly portrayed then, and for future generations, some of the early actions of the new-born saint when following after Jesus, our Boaz. If it is suggested that these were things Ruth must do, and thereby her rest was of works, we would mention once again – these things are types and shadows of better things, and not the better things themselves. Ruth was only following good instruction based on the manner of all Israel. She therefore was not “working” to obtain rest.

Naomi was as well certain what Boaz would do when Ruth would uncover his feet and lay down. She said, “He will tell thee what thou shalt do (Ruth 3.4).” And so he did. After Ruth complied with Naomi’s instructions and went in to Boaz, his first word of instruction to her was “And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman (Ruth 3.11).” “Fear not!” How much like our Lord did Boaz speak to this poor maiden seeking his kind assistance. “Fear not” is far better than the crude exhortations of Free-willism to “up and be doing.” So it is certain that before we can feel any comforts of the great work of our Kinsman-Redeemer, we must be blessed with the words of His voice to “fear not.” It must be emphasized – Boaz did not lay upon Ruth a single burden requiring fleshly effort for entitlement to any redemption benefits that might be available to her. No! No! His words were rather, “Fear not; I will do to thee...” which exactly correspond with what the saints of God learn respecting the redemption that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. As in Ruth’s case, the doing will be accomplished by our Boaz and not by ourselves.

Boaz also instructs Ruth to “tarry this night.” The matter could not be decided until a confrontation between Boaz and the nearer kinsman took place on the following day. But take place it surely must.

Thus the moment had nearly arrived. The redemption transaction was about to come to pass after all, every single event necessary to fulfill the chain of predestination transpired. Who could have known over ten years earlier, when Elimelech and his family ventured off to Moab, that Naomi would finally return with Ruth, and that Boaz would take her to be his wife in a redemptive marriage? Well, to be sure, man could not know such things, but God certainly did. Dare the most impious character alive deny the hand of God in bringing Ruth and Boaz together? “The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand (Isaiah 14.24).” It seems clear to us that if God thought about something He positively knew it – thus it must come to pass if we can rely on the words of Isaiah in the above passage. Moreover, if it (in this case the union of Ruth and Boaz) comes to pass, then God must have previously thought about it. Additionally, since the event did come to pass, which is the same as saying it shall stand, as in the text, then God certainly purposed the same.

If the views we have just proposed respecting the certainty of the wedded union of Ruth and Boaz have any meaning or purpose to us it is this: we may safely trust our all-wise God to bring to pass all things in our lives, just as He did in the lives of these two historical figures. To us this is soul-comforting and humbling. The predestination of all things gives security to our lives – both now and forevermore. It also reinforces our little hope. How consoling it is to fall before our God, even in the darkest hour of our existence, and trust the outcome of our current afflictions to Him. Even when we feel we may shortly

be swallowed up in our own filth we have some measure of assurance in this doctrine. It speaks to us that eventually these things shall pass and we shall find rest in the Saviour of such wretched sinners as we feel to be.

The admonition of Naomi to Ruth, after she had gone in to Boaz, commands our additional attention before reviewing other matter. It was briefly touched upon in our last article. “Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day (Ruth 3.18).” The assurances to Ruth concerning the course of Boaz in her behalf are emblazoned with gospel truths. How blessed it is when any of the troubled saints hear a more seasoned pilgrim, such as Naomi, say, “Sit still.” This rings with the same tones of David quoting our God, “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth (Psalm 46.10).” And again, as was the solemn importunity of Moses to the fearful Israelites, “And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever (Exodus 14.13).”

When God spoke by David, He let the saints know that His exaltation extends also among the heathen nations; even throughout all the earth. Surely those like Ruth find hope and comfort here, as well as patience, while assuming a still posture, both within and without. (When the Lord calmed the troubled sea for His disciples, He also calmed the troubled breast within each of them. And with what? “Peace be still.”) When Moses spoke, his words were intended to allay all fear that the present obstacles would linger longer to hinder the pursuit of Israel’s journey to the land of milk and honey. By standing still they assumed the posture of doing nothing to further their deliverance. They also assumed a posture of witnesses to the mighty works of the Lord as He swiftly redeemed them from their enemy. Just so was Ruth to sit still until her dilemma was resolved, as it surely would be. And, we hasten to add, it would be resolved agreeable to what God had before ordained or predestinated.

“Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall.” This was not an “if” you know how the matter will fall. No, indeed! If is one of the favorite words of the Arminian tribes, but we find nothing of any ifs in this injunction. The word was until. Until is a word that makes the outcome unmistakably clear. Until indicates positively that in short order Ruth would know, and that beyond controversy. It is certain from what we see here that Naomi had much more than a speculative attitude towards the coming events surrounding Ruth, Boaz, and the nearer kinsman.

Observe as well the word “how” in the statement. Again, it was not if the matter would fall but how.

Just what was it that gave Naomi such an air of certainty about all this? Foremost was her knowledge of Boaz! “For the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.” As far as Naomi was concerned there was no question how Boaz would respond to the situation. He will not be in rest. Certainty, as far as mortals are capable of certainty, was stamped on her every word. As we view this with an eye towards our Lord and His redemptive work, it assures those saints living today that neither would our Lord be in rest until He finish His redemptive work. Then, only after all was accomplished, would He rest. Well too it is to ponder the expression, “until he have finished the thing.” He, Boaz, would finish his work, and give us in so doing a figure of our Lord finishing His work, culminating with Him saying, “It is finished.” Neither Ruth nor Naomi were invited to assist Boaz in this momentous task. This conflict, with all the seeming obstacles in the path of redemption, was for Boaz alone to perform. Just so, we see our Saviour. He accomplished all that was eternally designed by the

Father so that He might redeem His bride, bring her to Himself, then present her publicly as His love and apple of His eye.

The reader will no doubt see a vast field of truths that might be explored here. We shall leave them to finish our theme by briefly examining the account of Judah and his sons by a Canaanite woman.

Judah and Pharez

The provisions of Leviticus 25, which we partially examined in our last article, No. 12, were for the redemption of a needy kinsman in Israel by his near-kinsman. All others were omitted by, first, the affirmation that Israelites specifically were to be redeemed, and second, by the absence of any exceptions. Ruth was only linked to the family of Elimelech by her marriage union to his son, Mahlon, now dead and buried in the distant country of Moab. The only possibility of her being benefited by the redemptive process was through her marriage union past, and a possible marriage union to come. Certainly, by today's sad standards (or the lack thereof, Ruth had little personal prospects of any further benefits possibly accruing to the family of Elimelech by any other means.

Without searching out all the Bible says respecting the marriage union, we shall at least view one or two avenues that have a bearing on the redemption of Ruth. It is certain God approved of Ruth being redeemed along with the parcel of land that belonged to Elimelech. We need for proof nothing more than it came to pass, and was sealed with the birth of Obed, who was numbered in the generations of our Lord.

Ruth was to be recovered from her widowhood. It was God's will for it to be so. Although she was not an Israelite by birth, she was brought into union with Israel by the marriage union and thus was, after the death of her husband, a widow in Israel. Provisions were made for widows in Israel as far back as the days of Judah, as can be seen in the peculiar and highly interesting record of Judah in Genesis, Chapter 38. In reality, the provisions were not nearly as much for the widow as they were for the deceased male, that his seed be raised up, though he was dead. This has a direct bearing on the language of Boaz where he announced his intentions to raise up the name of the dead by Ruth, the Moabite widow of Mahlon (Ruth 4.5,9,10). Careful consideration should be given to the notice Boaz gave on the point.

In reviewing what must be described as the unusual circumstances of Judah in Genesis 38 (a parenthetical chapter breaking the history of Joseph), we see what we believe to be the earliest recorded statement on our theme in all the Scriptures. Here, the foundation for future cases was, no doubt, built. Judah was one of the 12 sons of Jacob. It was from Judah's seed that our Lord Jesus, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, was to descend. Judah had gone down from his brethren and took up company with an Adullamite whose name was Hirah. Why, we are not told, at least directly. That this was a part of the plan of God to save sinners from their sins was no doubt the foremost reason, as shall shortly be seen.

“And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her (Genesis 38.2).” This unnamed Canaanite woman, daughter of Shuah (properly, Shua) bare Judah 3 sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. It should not require a degree in genetic research to understand simple facts that flow from a scrutiny of this union. If the mother of the 3 boys was a Canaanite woman, then the 3 boys would be half-Israelite and half-Canaanite. However, none of the three lads would be numbered in the line that reached to Jesus our Lord. Nor could they, for the Lord had determined from the foundation of the world that the seed come from another. What we do learn here is that the pattern of requesting brethren to raise up seed by their brother's widow was established

about that time. “And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar (Genesis 38.6).” One may think what they may, but the choosing of Tamar by Judah was no accident. As shall be seen, Tamar would figure very prominently in the promised seed. Er, Judah’s firstborn, however, “was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord slew him (verse 7).” Thus, Tamar became a widow upon the death of Judah’s firstborn, Er.

Then a series of events are recorded, each relative to the sojourn of Judah with the Adullamites and vital to our understanding of kinsman redemption.

Judah told Onan, his second son by the Canaanite daughter, to go in unto Tamar, the widow of Er, to raise up seed. Onan subsequently refused to seminate the widow, and so the Lord slew him as well. “Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father’s house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house (Genesis 38.11).” This was duplicity on the part of Judah and yet it was a link in the events that brought forth the son of Judah that was to be numbered among the line to Christ.

Some time after, described as “in the process of time, (verse 12)” Judah’s Canaanite wife died. After being comforted over the loss, Judah journeyed to Tininath. It was on the journey that Judah’s daughter-in-law, Tamar, disguised herself as a harlot and sat by an open place to seduce him. The reason for such conduct was that Judah had not honored his pledge to her that his youngest son Shelah be given to her.

Judah was sufficiently allured to go in to this unknown harlot. The unexpected result was that Tamar conceived by him. “And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law, hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt (Genesis 38.24).”

Judah’s passion to burn Tamar as a harlot was expeditiously extinguished when he was told by Tamar that he too was fully culpable in this episode of impropriety. When confronted with clear evidence, “Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more (Genesis 38.26).” His passion to burn Tamar having subsided, he then could set matters in order and abandon his unlawful union with her.

It would seem that we all could learn much from the self-righteous attitude displayed by this clamorous son of Jacob.

All of this interesting history leads us to our purpose in recording it. If the practice of raising up seed for a deceased brother was common at the time of Judah requiring it of his sons, we cannot tell. From the Lord’s displeasure at Onan for refusing to do so we may gather that it was practiced, and as well recognized by God. It is also worthy of notice that this was many years before the instructions pertaining to the same was given by Jehovah to the Israelites, shortly before they crossed over Jordan to the land they would occupy. Foremost among the things of interest we may glean from this episode is the end result of Judah’s plan to have his sons raise up seed for their dead brother. That end result was the birth of Pharez and his twin brother Zarah (Genesis 38.27-30). This brings us back directly to the consummation of the union of Ruth and Boaz as recorded in our text at the heading of this article: “So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).” We notice in passing that Ruth did not simply conceive; the Lord gave her conception. Obviously God was pleased with what was transpiring, and equally obvious to us is that this was all planned by God from eternity.

The book of Ruth did not conclude with the birth of Obed. There was more. The tie to Pharez, son of Judah by his daughter-in-law Tamar, is recorded and then linked directly to king David. “Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, And Animinadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David (Ruth 4.18-22).” And so the book of Ruth closes. Is it simple coincidence that the very first person mentioned in the Bible to institute the raising up seed for the dead, thus redeeming the deceased’s inheritance, was Judah, father of Pharez? We think not! Jacob’s blessing of Judah in Genesis 48.10 makes it clear that the Messiah would come through Judah’s seed. The first of the generations was Pharez, born of the shameful tryst with Tamar. And, is it coincidence that the beautiful book of Ruth closes with what appears to be nothing more than a simple genealogy? Again, we think not! All of this links Obed, son of Ruth and Boaz, to Judah through Pharez, offspring of deceit and disgrace. Nor is it a coincidence that Pharez was born as a result of Judah’s attempt to have his sons raise up seed to the dead. Was God only a spectator to these events? Or, rather, was all this a part of the eternal plan, whereby many generations of Abraham’s seed would lead to the Christ? Surely, the birth of Obed, as traceable to Pharez, was predestinated.

We have not fully touched on other points necessary to fill out this remarkable story. If the Lord wills, we shall take it up again.

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Number 14

RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued from No. 13)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

There are three areas we hope to explore in this article. We desire to fulfill our pledge to exhibit from Scriptures how Ruth could be redeemed by an Israelite, she a lowly Moabite, while the provisions for redemption were for the 12 tribes only. There is also the matter of self-redemption; if one be able. Finally, we shall explain just who was the nearer kinsman that had rights prior to Boaz; rights to be either performed or resolved before Boaz could redeem the inheritance of Elimelech, which included Ruth. If the Lord enables, we shall cast in our few mites on these points, expecting to close this part of our series. We leave it for our dear brethren to determine if they can feel comfortable with our poor views.

Redemption for Ruth the Moabites

It almost seems unnecessary to address the apparently indisputable reasons Ruth was eligible for redemption even though she was from an alien blood line. She was a descendant of Moab, the son of Lot by incest. Nevertheless, we shall suggest a few thoughts.

To begin, remember that the whole family of man has descended from Adam, including his wife, Eve. This alone is not sufficient to show cause for Ruth's redemption, but it does aim us at the starting point, and in the general direction of fuller proof. The starting point is the oneness of Adam and Eve. They were one in creation; one in physical union; one in transgression, and one in redemption. Eve was actually in Adam when he was created from the dust of the earth. When Eve was taken from Adam's side it was not to liberate or set her free; it was so she could live in physical union with her head. When the serpent beguiled Eve, her husband Adam was at her side, from the outset of the temptation to the culmination of the awful deed. After their fall God summoned them both through Adam (Genesis 3.9), and covered them with skins, which is a figure of our being covered in the work of redemption.

What affected one affected both. It did not matter that Eve was previously a single rib in Adam's side; their life was bound up as one life. “...and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2.24).” It was the marriage union that made them one.

We suggest here a strong postulate: The marriage union transcends all other relationships. It surpasses the ties of sibling relationships. It leads man from his mother and father (Genesis 2.24). It crosses tribal and ethnic barriers, bonding man and wife of any family combinations together as “bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.” When a minister speaks at the function we call a marriage service, probably few people realize the full impact of the expression “What God hath bound together, let not man put asunder.” The two are bound together and bonded as one under the blessing of God. It is equally so with “Till death do us part.” This must all be considered when reviewing the circumstances of Ruth and Boaz. Ruth was the bonded wife of Mablou, son of Elimelech. The moment she entered the relationship

of marriage with Mahlon, she became intertwined with life in Elimelech's family. She could not have been more a part of the family had she been born in it.

Abraham married Sarah. She was either his half-sister or niece, depending on how Genesis 20.12 is understood. Joseph married Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On (Genesis 41.45). She was obviously an Egyptian. Moses married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12.1). Rahab, the mother of Boaz, was of non-Israelite parentage. She was the harlot of Jericho that married his father. Countless other unions might also be suggested, but these show that there were no barriers or obstacles to hinder a full bond between man and wife.

Each of these marriage unions, despite the different backgrounds in each, represented the strongest ties of relationship known to the human family. There is only one relationship shared by man that God has forbidden it be put asunder, and that is marriage. Children leave parents. Brothers and sisters scatter or pursue different interests. Friends become alienated. But a heaven-sanctioned marriage is impressed with the seal of God's blessing. This, to us, is why Ruth was eligible for redemption under Israelite institutions. She was, notwithstanding her fleshly origin, an Israelite indeed. By union with Mahlon she became entitled to everything Mahlon was or possessed as it respected the family. And his death did not lessen her status; it only made her eligible or free to marry again in the Lord. (See Dueteronomy 25.5; Romans 7.1-6)

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband (Ephesians 5.28-33).” In reading these verses we come to an unmistakable conclusion: Paul represented to us an illustration of the marriage union by comparing the union of Christ and His church. Natural or fleshly unions, subject to human frailties, are a figure of the spiritual union which knows no such frailties.

Witness then the union of Mahlon and Ruth. As with all other true marriages, it was a figure of the union of Christ and His eternally loved bride. Thus, for it to be a proper figure, it must have been predestinated to transpire, else it might never have been realized. We invite any Arminian to offer evidence to the contrary. When the apostle informed us that to love our wife was to love ourselves he was drawing from the truth that Christ loved His bride before she was His bride, while she is His bride and forevermore. That is the nature of the marriage union.

We conclude that Ruth was entitled to the same accord as was shown her husband Mahlon, even though he was dead and buried. For this reason Boaz, or the nearer kinsman, was privileged to redeem this Moabite maiden, though she was not born of Hebrew parents. Her union with Mahlon made her the equal of blood kin.

Predestination must again be viewed as the reason for the union of Boaz and Ruth. It was predestination that made certain the illustration complemented the fact. That is, if Ruth and Boaz are figures of Christ and the church, as we fully believe they are, then the figures must be equally as certain of fulfillment as the fact they are typical of, in this case, our Lord and His bride. We complete this point by saying, not only was Ruth eligible for redemption under Israel's governing statutes, it was an absolute certainty that she be redeemed. To repeat again what must be obvious to the honest reader,

there could be no Obed if Boaz did not redeem Ruth. Thus, if the birth of Obed was among those things predestinated to conform him to the image of Christ (Romans 8.29) then the redemption of Ruth must have been equally certain. Otherwise all would fail of transpiring. Can anything other than predestination secure all this according to, and complementing, the purpose of God?

It is sublime and profound to think that something as seemingly ordinary as marriage involves so much that signifies the eternal and spiritual union. Little wonder then that the Scriptures abound with instructions touching the sanctity and value of marriage.

Self Redemption: “If he be able”

“After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him; Either his uncle, or his uncle’s son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself (Leviticus 25.48,49).” Several essential points merit repeating here, even though we have suggested them before. The first is, the instructions of Leviticus 25.48, 49 relate only to a single family, Israel. The redemption there detailed was for none except those described as brethren. Neither can this redemption be possibly confused with what the Arminian system calls “soul-saving.” That redemption was confined to restoring a kin that had fallen into servitude or destitution. Their destitution was a natural calamity, not a spiritual one. Thus it is highly figurative, but only figurative, of the fallen elect reduced to spiritual bondage by sin. The holy law of God was to be utilized by a near kinsman that might be moved by the poor claimant in the days of old Israel. Today’s claimants enter their plea before the very throne of God. Soul-savers have no credentials to practice in this court.

It should not be necessary to give extensive evidence from the Scriptures to show that not one needy sinner ever delivered himself from the claims of the law. What they need is the Wonderful Counsellor. The law was good and holy but the flesh was weak. Yet for all this the Israelite was given ample opportunity to extricate himself from destitution, if he was able. The observable fact, however, is beyond dispute: at no time was the Israelite ever able to deliver himself once impoverished. In fact, much of the Old Testament cries out in thunder tones as an indictment against self-redemption. More than anything else, the Old Testament shows how, even under the best of God’s care for His people, they were not able to redeem themselves. Nevertheless, the privilege was there – “if he be able.”

Contemplate once more the dire circumstances of Ruth and Naomi. It was, according to the law of their nation, their privilege to redeem the inheritance of Elimelech as being their own. But – were they able? From appearance Naomi could no longer engage in the drudgery of gleaning in the fields. It is doubtful that she was active in physical toil. It is seen from the Scriptures that she stayed behind as Ruth went out each day to glean in the fields. Remember as well that gleaning was the labor of those reduced to poverty. Can any proofs be found that suggest these widows were in any position to even hope to redeem themselves? Without multiplying proofs, it is manifestly evident that Ruth and Naomi had no known possibility of redeeming their lost inheritance. “If he be able” was a provision for them, but it was not a possibility. To paraphrase the words of Matthew 18.24,25:

“Ten thousand talents in debt,
And not a farthing to pay.

Surely redemption rested on the ability of someone other than themselves if it was to be a reality for Ruth and Naomi. The poor things could not so much as think of self-redemption, though by law privileged to self-redeem if able.

Blessedly, from all eternity full provision had been made. And, we may fairly say, the full provision could not fail. We say from all eternity for that is how ancient the plan was to secure redemption for these two destitute hand-maidens, recently come up from the wilderness. From the beginning, in the all-wise and wondrous purpose of God, Boaz was predestinated, and that absolutely, to possess abundance of fields and additional wealth at the very time these impoverished widows required a redeemer. Moreover, he was endowed with a desire to redeem. Fools, Arminians, free-willers and Conditionalists may propose a variety of spurious reasons how this perfect timing and other related circumstances essential to the redemption of these vessels of mercy transpired. The poor humble children of the kingdom, however, see the spiritually obvious; the Helper of the helpless had aforetime made perfect provision, thus assuring the redemption of those two who were unable to do so themselves.

To conclude the matter of this “if he be able” redemption, we shall anticipate criticism of our views. “Why would God tell the Israelite he may redeem himself 'if he be able' if it was not possible to do so?” So goes the general inquiry. From a strictly Scriptural viewpoint we might say “Who art thou that repliest against God?” There is another reason we feel is also worthy of God. By issuing the provision of self-redemption God beforehand silenced all that might complain their (supposed) freewill was violated or that perhaps they were “not given a chance.” In effect, God said, “If ye be able, ye may redeem yourselves.” When, though, the struggling sinner is forced to review his lack of resources and assets he woefully discovers a startling fact. The privilege does not carry with it the power of self-redemption. He is, like Ruth and Naomi, bankrupt. He is nothing more than a petitioner for mercy. Just as with Ruth and Naomi, even gleaning in the fields of the wealthy is contingent on their charity. Thus drooping and heavy hearts often produce tearful but uplifted eyes. Heaven itself is scanned for relief, for like Naomi we have gone out full and the Lord has brought us home again empty (Ruth 1.21). May God be praised should it be so with us.

The nearer kinsman

“And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I (Ruth 3.12).” The book of Ruth contains many brilliant types; none more so than Boaz, a type or figure of Christ our Redeemer. Yet there is in this book a character known only as the nearer kinsman which possessed prior rights to the inheritance of Elimelech. He was first in line to redeem. Thus, we feel safe in concluding that since Boaz is presented to us as a type, then equally so must this nearer kinsman be a type of some considerable importance.

It is evident the book of Ruth steers us far closer to the New Testament anti-types than many other Old Testament books. Consider: while the possibilities of numerous kinsman might have existed in any Israelite family, in the case of Ruth and Naomi there were but two; Boaz and the one nearer kinsman. Without doubt this makes the investigation of the type much easier. We are as certain as we are capable that Boaz is a type of Christ, so who then does this one nearer kinsman represent to us? It seems plain enough to us, he must represent the “old man of the flesh.” There appears to be no other possibilities.

There are but two families in the whole of creation. One is the generations of Adam (Genesis 5.1, 2). The other is the generation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1.1). In Adam all die, that is, all that trace their seed back to Adam. This family comprises all the human race. Even so, in Christ shall all be made alive, meaning all that are in Him by eternal choice of the Father (Ephesians 1.4). Everyone then belongs to Adam’s family but not everyone belongs to the family of our Redeemer. Only those with a new nature are included in the family of our Lord.

This is evident from the Word of God; when a poor sinner is quickened to spiritual life he then possesses both an “old man” derived from his natural birth, and a “new man” created in Christ Jesus. These dwell together in our earthly house of this tabernacle (II Corinthians 5.1). Paul describes them as “our outward man” which perishes, and the “inward man” which is renewed day by day (II Corinthians 4.16). Similarly, Peter illustrated this dual relationship as an “outward” man being adorned of plaiting the hair, and the “hidden man of the heart” (I Peter 3.3, 4).

It requires no mental acrobatics to arrive at the obvious: our old man of the flesh (in Adam) existed prior to the spiritual or new man. This is clear from the statement of the Lord in John 3, “Ye must be born again.” Then it must follow that our old man of the flesh has first claim on any inheritance or redemption. Can it be imagined that any other person could be nearer kin to us than ourselves in nature? The nearer kinsman of the Book of Ruth is not Boaz, the figure of Christ, so Christ is not our nearer kinsman. It cannot be an angel for they neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matthew 22.30). Some have suggested the law was the nearer kinsman. We fail to see how that notion could be sustained by Scriptures. The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3.24), and that is nowhere near what transpired when Boaz met the kinsman at the gate of the city (Ruth 4.1ff). The law simply cannot fit the figure.

The encounter between Boaz and the nearer kinsman is amply revealing for us to arrive at a clear view of just who this privileged claimant was and who he represents by a figure. “And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. (Ruth 4.4).” Boaz dealt plainly with his relation; if it was his will to redeem, then he should do so! But if not, Boaz would hear his intentions not to redeem as well.

“I will redeem it.” Without full knowledge of the particular details the nearer kinsman (the old man) seems wholly willing to buy up this squandered inheritance of Elimelech. That is, until he hears further from Boaz upon those particulars not previously mentioned. “Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance (Ruth 4.5).”

Observe first, the whole transaction was being dictated by Boaz, in the interest of himself, and of course the interest of Naomi and Ruth. This in itself is a lovely representation of our Boaz seeing over the squandered interests of His family. And, there is evidence enough here for us to see that Boaz then, and our Boaz today, has the sovereign right to set down the terms of any redemption in which they delight to be involved. Also seen here is further evidence of the description of the marriage union we have previously given. Boaz speaks of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead! Even though Mahlon was long dead, Ruth was still his wife until married to another. The nearer kinsman was confronted with her status as part of the redemption package, that he must raise up the name of Ruth’s dead husband upon his, Mahlon’s, inheritance. The nearer kinsman must be willing to give up his life, as represented in his seed, to redeem the field and any other properties of the family of Elimelech. This he could not do for he had no will to do so.

“And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. (Ruth 4.6).” This speaks volumes, but we shall offer only several thoughts. It seems obvious that the kinsman coveted the fields of the dead – but not sufficiently to give up his firstborn to a family of wastrels. He was willing to redeem the cursed fields of this

present world if given opportunity, but he clearly had no intentions of marring his own inheritance by sacrificing his firstborn son to an old legal stipulation provided to help the helpless. I cannot! I cannot! What more needs be said of this nearer kinsman motivated by purely selfish interests? The “old man” could not redeem, for despite being the nearest of kin he had an idolatrous disposition towards self. Pitiful and wretched creature he was. He could love self but Ruth he could not love, for to him she was but an alien and a hindrance. He had no will! He had no power! “Redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.”

We believe the old man is sufficiently exposed by these few lines of comparison to let the contrast be as thus described. However, passing from this instance without looking a little closer at both Boaz and the nearer kinsman would be forsaking several choice pearls of truth.

What the nearer kinsman recoiled from was giving his seed to another; one that in his probable estimation was unworthy of so great a sacrifice. But in fact, if this old man could have, as free-willers believe, somehow mustered the integrity and fortitude to accept the terms of Boaz he would have changed the course of the whole world and thrown the eternal plan of God into utter confusion. This is a bold yet positive fact. As sure as the rising of the sun each day, just that sure it was that Obed, this child in the line of Christ, resided in the loins of Boaz and not this nearer kinsman. That being beyond dispute, from a scientific as well as spiritual point of fact, then it was impossible, totally impossible, for this old man to take up the proposition. In fact, we repeat, he could have changed the course of the world as soon as he could have redeemed the inheritance. Now we ask, what is this all but a little portion of the predestinated plan of God? Was it possible for the nearer kinsman to raise up seed to Mahlon? If you believe he could, then ask yourself what would have become of Obed. If it was certain for Obed to be born, then could anything less than predestination have made it certain? If so, what?

On the other hand, Boaz, that mighty man of wealth, knew what he had to do and honored the law to a jot and tittle. He did it for the joy that was set before him. He did the Father’s will that instituted the provision. He set his family free and, moreover, took them as his own. What blessed comparisons might be made between Boaz and our Redeemer. Like Boaz, Christ redeemed to the utmost. He entered the great redemption transaction in love, not for selfish views. He raised up the name of His dead, from Adam to the last poor destitute sinner that was ever sold under sin and bondage. Hear again Naomi on this point: “Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day (Ruth 3.18).” And so both Boaz and Christ did.

There is yet much additional matter we hope to cover before passing on to the next book of the Bible. It should be kept in mind in all this lengthy comparison that types and shadows are limited in scope. They often fall short of what we might hope for them. This is, no doubt, the fault of our fleshly weakness and not the Scriptures. There can be no question, however, that Christ and eternal redemption shines brilliantly in the book of Ruth, probably more so than in any other book of the Old Testament. If the Lord wills, we shall take this subject up one more time even though we had hoped to conclude with this article.

The Remnant

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RUTH – THE LINK FROM JUDGES TO THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(Continued from No. 14)

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son (Ruth 4.13).”

In our lengthy series of articles drawn from the book of Ruth we have strived to maintain our original theme, predestination from Genesis to Revelation. With some few points of considerable interest, a conclusion to our review of the book of Ruth is now contemplated. As always, it is our fervent prayer the Lord would bless both writer and reader.

“Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down (Ruth 4.1).”

Boaz was a type of Christ. To discover some of the particular beauties of this fourth chapter, contemplations on the type and anti-type will be beneficial.

The prominence and position Boaz maintained in Beth-lehem-judah were well known. He was apparently beloved generally by all with whom he engaged in commerce. His coming to the gate, commanding attention and respect, ordering the posture of those assembled, indicated he stood in renown. Upon arrival of the nearer kinsman, Boaz said “Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here.” We are not informed what business the kinsman had there, but Boaz waited him out as if he knew he would come by that way. We previously mentioned how it was certain the kinsman would show up, and just on time; otherwise confusion would have prevailed in the very plan of God. The birth of Obed, Jesse, David, and all the rest of that blessed line to Jesus the Lord hung in the balance. The reason we can say it was certain? Pre-destination!

Predestination! A (any) destination planned beforehand by God for His good purpose. This destination, planned beforehand, was the prompt arrival of the kinsman at the gate of the city. So up he came, at the very same day, hour, minute, and second that it was determined for Boaz to be there also. Arminians shall fan out the flames of eternal hell before they overthrow the truth of God’s universal government displayed in this episode. Boaz and the nearer kinsman would meet that day. They would resolve the issues. The nearer kinsman had to be dismissed from consideration as redeemer by his own inability to fulfill the role. Boaz was to be the supreme figure in the conclave as they met at the gate of the city. Thus, the nearer kinsman fulfilled all that was predestinated for him.

“Ho, such a one! Turn aside, sit down here.” Boaz does not call the man by name, or at least the Spirit of inspiration did not suffer it to be recorded. All we need to know of this kinsman is what was recorded. It is extremely instructive to see that when Boaz spoke, the kinsman responded accordingly. The nearer kinsman could have sprouted wings and flown away as easily as he could have refused the dictates of Boaz. Should any disagree, or perhaps find our assertions repugnant, we ask pointedly – offer proof to the contrary. What are the facts? This: Boaz requested the kinsman to turn aside and sit down. Did he refuse? Not a squirm or wiggle was evinced. The fact is, he turned aside; he sat down.

“And he [Boaz] took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down (Ruth 4.2).” Order, under the steady direction of Boaz, continued. Boaz probably selected ten men, both out of custom, and to signify the law with which they were engaged. Whatever the reason, there was no problem for Boaz to assemble this council. As a type of our dear Lord and Master, Boaz would certainly realize his will without the slightest impediment. It would not be amiss to say – these ten elders were made willing in the day of his [Boaz’s] power.

All things were ready. This extraordinary procedure was to be enacted by the convocation at the gate. The time of redemption was at hand. Either Boaz (the active) or the nearer kinsman (the passive) would redeem the inheritance of Elimelech.

Viewed from the perspective of a free-willer, a clash of wills and temperaments might have developed. The scene had the makings of a conflict of great proportion. The Arminian observer would wait with tense anticipation the uncertain outcome. Who, if any, would marry Ruth? Would Boaz or the kinsman of first claim prevail? Questions always surface when affections are driven by fleshly reasoning. May the Lord be praised, believers do not anticipate the capricious decisions of man, nor await mysterious outcomes either. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord (Proverbs 16.33).” Before the earliest motions of the created universe had pulsated, the issues of that momentous day were settled. “How?” one may ask. How? In the will and good purpose of our heavenly Father! “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46.9, 10).”

God either was, or was not, involved in the matters between Boaz and the nearer kinsman along with the others assembled at the gate. But, if God was not involved in the affairs at the gate then there was no certainty that anything would result favorable to the birth of Obed. He may, or he may not, be born to Ruth and Boaz, if God had no hand in events. If the birth of Obed was not determined by God, then it would depend on forces outside of God. The birth would be the result of chance, fortune, or whatever. The thought is frightful! More than frightful, however, it is preposterous. If there are events in which God has no involvement, to that extent He is no God at all. Whatever forces rule or control events which God does not preside over are the gods of those events. Surely, the Arminian would drive God from the universe if they could. God’s little children await no such uncertain outcome, however, for their God is sovereign in all things, including the disconcerting of Arminian schemes. “That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish (Isaiah 44.25).”

If God was involved in the affairs at the gate that day then He was fully involved. His ways are not our ways. If God was at all involved, and He was, then His involvement dates from all eternity, before there was a world on which to stage the episode. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He changes not. With Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. All things are (and always have been) naked and open before Him. He is in one mind. He speaks and His creation obeys. This, our God, is worthy of our worship and adoration, praise, and anthems. He feeds the ravens, upholds the sparrow, adorns the lily, and commands the winds and waves to obey Him. Can such a God as ours absent Himself from the affairs of mankind, leave them to fortune and chance, and abdicate His sovereignty? The power to decide issues that affect not only the nominal affairs of the world, but of the world to come as well, rest firmly in the mind of Jehovah.

God had eternally determined the issue. All events concluded in precise harmony with His holy predestination, Satan and Arminians notwithstanding.

We examine finally some remaining details. Having previously examined verses 3-6 of chapter 4, we turn our attention to the 7th and 8th verses. “Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe (Ruth 4.7, 8).”

The kinsman lamented, “I cannot redeem it” therefore his refusal was to be permanently recognized among his people by the removal of his shoe. This was no ancient custom in the day of Boaz and Ruth, but it did date to the arrival of Israel in the land of promise, probably 135-150 years earlier. Authority for the practice of drawing off the shoe was given in the general instructions from Jehovah to Israel, and recorded in Deuteronomy 25. It was there the authority for raising up the name of the dead brother by his widow was recorded. The drawing off the shoe was a testimony to the refusal of the kinsman to take the wife of a brother. This was in perfect harmony with the directions of kinsman-redemption, found in Leviticus 25.47-49.

To learn exactly what precipitated the removal of the shoe, we cite from the Bible account: “Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother’s wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother’s house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed (Deuteronomy 25.8-10).” From this record we conclude that the removal of the shoe was performed by the aggrieved party; in this instance, the widow the kinsman refused to take so the seed of the dead brother might be raised up. The reluctant kinsman did not remove his own shoe any more than he spit in his own face. “So shall it be done unto that man...” makes it clear beyond controversy; the kinsman’s shoe was not removed by himself. The shoe was removed by another. “The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.” makes it equally clear. The public humbling of this kinsman was inflicted by the offended party.

“Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.” At this point the nearer kinsman of Naomi and Ruth acted in a manner equivalent to the recalcitrant kinsman of Deuteronomy 25. Buy it for thee was the same as saying, I like not to take her. Thus the time had come. The shoe was to be removed, signifying the refusal to redeem.

The question now is: just who drew off the shoe when matters with Boaz and the nearer kinsman were finally resolved? Was it Boaz, or was it the kinsman? From appearance, there seems to be weight of evidence in favor of both positions. On the one hand, the record in Deuteronomy 25 cannot be disputed: the negligent party had his shoe removed by another, the aggrieved widow. However, in the book of Ruth, the language of both verse 7 and 8 makes plausible the opinion the nearer kinsman removed his own shoe. “...a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor” weighs in favor of the kinsman, but could be explained in several ways. It is possible the man mentioned was the aggrieved party, and the neighbor was a bystander or interested onlooker. But that is only speculation – it will prove nothing. It could as well be the practice had been relaxed, thus allowing the kinsman to draw off his own shoe. Rather than suffer the indignity of having his shoe removed by the aggrieved widow, he was permitted to remove it himself. That too is only speculation, but is probably more likely than the first suggestion.

So how shall all this be resolved?

There is no question what Deuteronomy 25 teaches. The insulted widow personally removed the shoe of the resistant kinsman.

We know of no other record in Scriptures to point to, as either corroborating evidence, or that conflicts with the instructions for the removal of the shoe. The issue is, then, do we draw our conclusions from the testimony of Deuteronomy, or do we rely on what seems to be the somewhat different actions recorded in the book of Ruth? There is no hesitation here for our part! The evidence of the distinct instructions in Deuteronomy must prevail. That was the instruction given to the Israelites originally, and it allows no dilution nor dare we view it with indifference.

The suggestion that Naomi and Ruth were not even present at the meeting when Boaz triumphed over the nearer kinsman may be used to question our firm conclusions. Since both were absent, then neither of them removed the shoe as was instructed in Deuteronomy. That is exactly correct, and is also exactly why we propose that the Deuteronomy instructions must prevail. The actions in the book of Ruth only appear to be contradictory.

We mentioned previously that Boaz was a prominent type of our Lord. Never more did he shine forth as a type than when he consummated the redemption of the household of his kin. The glory radiated majestically, even in the removing of the kinsman's shoe. The Deuteronomy account specified the widow take off the shoe of the kinsman for refusing to do the part of a kinsman-redeemer. In ordinary cases, we doubt not that is exactly what took place. In this account, however, we are looking at Boaz, the foremost figure of redemption found in the whole of the Old Testament, undertaking for his kin. So then, to raise the figure above the normal occurrences of kinsman-redemption, which only incidentally prefigure the work of our Lord to redeem, Boaz himself removed the shoe for the aggrieved widow. He acted in behalf of both Naomi and Ruth, though only Ruth was being directly spumed by the nearer kinsman. In fact, Boaz undertook for Ruth and Naomi, and the whole house of Elimelech – to the fullest extent. Whatever debts accrued to their account, Boaz paid them in full, and then finally removed the shoe of the nearer kinsman who refused to redeem.

Boaz redeemed fully. Ruth and Naomi were completely passive. Our Lord redeems fully as well. The elect have nothing to do with their redemption except to be recipients. They too are passive. Boaz, therefore was the fullest figure possible of our Lord in kinsman-redemption. Had anyone else removed the shoe of the nearer kinsman, especially the kinsman himself, it would have greatly demeaned the typical figure.

“And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chilion's and Mahion's, of the hand of Naomi (Ruth 4.9).” It should not be thought that Boaz paid the price directly to Naomi. Rather, it should be understood otherwise. The right or authorization came from (of) the hand of Naomi but she did not receive payment. Should this be questioned, we recommend the reader review again the account in Leviticus 25.47-49. There it is manifest; the debt was the property of the sojourner or stranger that waxed rich by the poor brother. Moreover, if the price of redemption was paid to Naomi, it would completely falsify the type. Boaz paid the price for, not to, Naomi.

Boaz also certified the whole of his business among witnesses. There was no question – the full work was performed. Complete restitution was made. Never again could a lawful claim be lodged against the household of Eliemlech. What Boaz redeemed was beyond any claim that might be initiated. Better still

for Ruth and Naomi, their restitution had brought them into full union with the family of Boaz. By redemption, they were at once elevated to a status far superior to their former migrant-family station. Finally, the wealth and position of Boaz guaranteed the future solvency of Ruth and Naomi. These new members of the family of Boaz were now at rest. No one could henceforth question their position, for they had been elevated to wealth proportionate to the good will of Boaz, which we may say, seemed to be considerable.

The spiritual reader cannot fail to see the beauties in comparing the types Boaz, with the anti-type, Jesus our Redeemer. Wherever Boaz excelled, considerable as that excelling was, our Lord is more excellent and worthy of all praise.

The shoe

“How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter... (Song of Solomon 7.1)!” There seems to be considerable in the Scriptures to cast additional light on the subject of the shoe and its removal by Boaz. Simple reflection will show that shoes are a necessary component of dress for most occasions. This is particularly true if one is a traveler or making their way from one place to another. We shall offer several thoughts on shoes, in the hope it may further our understanding of Boaz removing the shoe of the nearer kinsman.

Solomon, as well as Boaz, was a type of our Lord. His bride, as did Ruth, represented the church. Solomon exclaimed the beauty of his bride as she was adorned in shoes. The first word of instruction Solomon gave this maid was, “...go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock... (Song of Solomon 1.8).” This indicates she was to forsake friends and family, even all that was dear, and follow him who would be forevermore her companion. The journey would require shoes, for the way would at times be rough and thorny. Thus Solomon pronounced her beautiful when she was made ready for the journey. For Solomon’s bride, like Ruth, she had been made ready, and would henceforth journey with her lord in honor. Shoes were a necessary component of dress and adornment, and rendered the bride beautiful in the eyes of Solomon.

There are those times when shoes must not be worn. Those times are similar to the situation of the nearer kinsman. He must have his shoe removed to show his inferior stature to the redeemer. So it was with Moses. With considerable curiosity he approached the bush that burned with fire yet was not consumed. And what was the call of God to Moses when he gazed on the fiery manifestation? “And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground (Exodus 3.4,ff).” Now Moses was a man of great attainments (Acts 7.22) and could be considered the finest among the sons of Israel in his day. However, when drawing near to God, his superior, the inferior Moses could not stand in the presence of God while wearing shoes. The bride of Solomon was beautiful in shoes, but Moses, the figure of the law, must remove his shoes. He stood in the presence of the Eternal Flame. The removal of the shoes portrayed the subordinate stature of Moses, especially while in the presence of Jehovah.

Paul wrote the Ephesians to “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6.11).” Had the apostle been writing to those that were retiring, or only sitting idly by, this direction would not be nearly so vital. But, the instructions were for those that were to stand against the wiles of the devil, not act the part of idlers. Therefore, among those items of preparedness was the covering for the feet. “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of

peace (Ephesians 6.15).” Clearly, the church is not like the nearer kinsman, having their shoes removed; rather the precious gospel adorns their walk and protects their feet as they wrestle with principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (verse 12).

Luke records a story having considerable bearing on this theme: A father divided unto his two sons his living. The younger, often described as the prodigal, took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Soon he had spent all. Next, a mighty famine arose in that land. The son began to be in want. Unable to grub out a living in the fields feeding swine, unable to eat the husks the swine ate, having no man give unto him, he came to himself. He remembered the hired servants of his father had bread, while he perished with hunger. The poor impoverished son vowed to arise, return to his father and confess his sin against heaven and before his father. He would relinquish his sonship and take his standing among the hired servants. “And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him (Luke 15.20).” The son fulfilled his intentions and confessed his sins. “But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet (Luke 15.22).”

The son was much like Naomi and Ruth. He had come back home from a far country. Just as Naomi lamented, “I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty,” so had he returned from an extended stay which resulted in bankruptcy. But, returning prodigals, just as Naomi and Ruth, find grace and mercy rather than servitude. Robes! Rings! Shoes! Even the sacrifice of the fatted calf! The son cannot stand in the presence of the father in tatters. “Bring forth the best robe!” It cannot be questioned if the father yet owned the poor vagrant as his son. “Put a ring on his hand!” Finally, the son was not like Moses before the bush burning with fire. Instead of hearing the injunction to remove his shoes, it was said, “[put] shoes on his feet!”

We believe the reader can make the comparisons necessary to find the beauty of this study. Our Boaz will remove the shoe from those that despise the bride. He shall also shoe those for whom He grants repentance.

The reader may find it interesting to give consideration to the Lord washing the feet of His disciples (John 13). To wash their feet meant they would necessarily have to have their shoes removed. This would show their low state before the presence of Him Who would also lower Himself to bow at the feet of His disciples. With this we reluctantly take leave of the book of Ruth. We have only whispered what could be shouted from the rooftops. Our few lines are insignificant, compared to volumes which might be written. Nevertheless, by the leave of our Lord, we have attempted to display from this sublime story how the absolute predestination of all things permeates every line and syllable. In the absence of predestination, the book of Ruth is reduced to random events that might just as well not have transpired at all – but for chance. By the grace of God we have been made to prefer predestination.

The Remnant

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Number 16

I SAMUEL – SAUL: THE FIRST OF THE KINGS IN ISRAEL

“But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them (I Samuel 8.6,7).”

The book of Judges closed with these words: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 21.25).” And yet the Lord God was king; He was their king (I Samuel 12.12)! The meaning then of the expression “there was no king in Israel” was that no one sat upon a throne or took up the sword to visibly lead the armies of Israel into battle against their foes. While the tribes of Israel had their eyes fixed on earthly things rather than heaven above there was no king in Israel.

The book of Ruth followed Judges as a parenthetical illustration of redemption. Boaz, that eminent figure of Christ, set forth in the most noble tone a preview of the King of kings undertaking for all the needs of His subjects.

Next we find the book of I Samuel drawing back the curtain still further so that we may see the subjects of the King seeking an earthly monarch. A carnal desire for show and display betrayed their urgent request to Samuel that they be like the nations about them, that they too might have a king.

THE FIRST KINGS IN SCRIPTURES

About 1800 years before our text at the heading, Abram encountered the first kings mentioned in Scriptures. The recorded events give a graphic view of the general deportment of kings then, and throughout the history of mankind. For example: “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar (Genesis 14.1, 2).” The observant reader will at once see the first thing mentioned of these kings; they made war.

After Abram visited swift destruction on the kings that took captive his nephew Lot, he met two other kings of very opposite character to each other. The first, the king of Sodom sought to enrich and reward Abram. The offer was no sooner tendered than rejected with, “That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich (Genesis 14.23).” Abram, the father of the faithful, was obviously a good student of human nature. Nor was he about to become indebted to this carnal king in any way.

Abram also met Melchizedek, king of Salem. Melchizedek was infinitely superior to the other kings of that period. He brought bread and wine to Abram and “was the priest of the most high God (Genesis 14.18).” After blessing both Abram and the most high God, Melchizedek received tithes of all Abram had gained in the conflict. (See Hebrews 7.4 for the limits of Abram’s tithing.) We restrict our remarks concerning this great king with the observation that he was a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ in His priesthood.

It is significant to see that the introduction of kings in the Scriptures coincides to the advent of Abram, the father of the nation of Israel. We cannot view this in any light other than the purposes of God for His people. It is, after all, predestination from Genesis to Revelation for which we are presently contending.

Unless one views the presence of the early kings in Scriptures as mere matters of national taste or preference, he must acknowledge that each king, great and small, had a predetermined course to run; a marked out journey to fulfill. Each king, with his individual characteristics and manner, was as surely raised up by God to fulfill His will as was every other creature, from the lowly sparrow that cannot fall without Him, to the mighty leviathan which God has likened to the king of the children of pride (Job 41.34). Dare it be said God simply stumbled up on the idea of calling the leviathan the king of the children of pride as an afterthought? None but blasphemers and unhumbled Arminians would dare.

OTHER KINGS

The kings with whom Abram came into conflict were by no means all this chosen family, Israel, would encounter. When the 12 tribes sojourned in Egypt, first in favor, later in disfavor, the kings of Egypt controlled their affairs – under the superintending hand of God. Many think of the rulers of Egypt as Pharaohs only, but properly, they were kings, as seen in the following verse: “Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph (Exodus 1.8).” Soon enough this king, who knew not Joseph, died; and other kings came in his place. Finally, Moses was born and grew up in the courts of the king, only to flee for a season. “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible (Hebrews 11.27).” At the appointed time, this king also died (Exodus 2.23) and when God heard the sighs by reason of Israel’s bondage, He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob (Exodus 2.23, 24). Again, the government of God is seen threaded through the whole fabric of the affairs of Israel. Were there no kings to afflict the children of Israel, they would not have cried unto the Lord. Moreover, since there was a covenant between them and God it is vivid evidence God was dealing with them after a plan. We know that plan as predestination.

In the passing of time Israel was delivered from the cruel bondage in Egypt. They were no longer pestered and tormented by the kings of that dark land. They were certainly not through with myriad conflicts from the kings of the period, however. There was the king of Edom, refusing passage to Israel through his lands (Numbers 20.18). Then, after the death of Aaron, there was king Arad the Canaanite, who afflicted the Israelites and took some of them prisoners until the Lord utterly destroyed his forces (Numbers 21.1ff). Among the more brazen kings to seek the hurt of Israel was Balak, king of the Moabites (Numbers 22.4). It was Balak that employed Balaam to curse the people of Israel. We add in passing, both Balak and Balaam were wholly frustrated in their efforts – the glory of God continued to reign among the chosen tribes.

After Joshua led the tribes across Jordan into the land of promise he was confronted with the kings of that region on a more or less regular basis. “Joshua made war a long time with all those kings (Joshua 11.18).” Among the first encounters was engaging the king of Jericho. It was this king that sent to Rahab the harlot in search of the two spies from Israel. Worth mention as well is the testimony of Rahab that Jericho was reduced to terror at the presence of Israel for they had “...heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed (Joshua 2.10).” From this testimony it is clear that all those events were necessary components in

shaping the views and conduct of each participant to bring down the walls and power of Jericho. Was all this chance or predestination?

From the foregoing we conclude that Israel had ample reason to have no use for kings, for all they knew of, or had contact with, were cruel, oppressive, and without pity on them. Kings were generally vicious towards their own people and centuries of unpleasant exposure to alien kings should have led Israel to the unmistakable conclusion – none but Jehovah could be safely trusted to govern their affairs. Moreover, after the death of Joshua and the advent of Judges to rule Israel, the Lord left a number of nations about them to prove those who had not known the wars of Canaan (Judges 3.1ff). Early apostasy set in among the children of Israel; they did evil in the sight of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God; they served Balaam and the groves (Judges 3.7). Notice in the following that God chastised his people with an alien king: “Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years (Judges 3.8).”

“And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother (Judges 3.9).” Wondrous grace – God took pity on His wayward children; He raised up a deliverer to free them from the yoke of the oppressive king and gave them rest; in this instance, 40 years. May the Lord enable us to see in this our Deliverer rescuing us from the dreaded king of terrors.

Sadly, Israel was not to continue in their rest. Soon they did evil again in the sight of the Lord. The Lord then strengthened Eglon, king of Moab, against Israel. Following this episode the pattern was again repeated. Next, Jaban, king of Canaan, harassed the children of Israel. So it went; on and on, until the time of Samuel. It was then extraordinary for Israel to want a king. An earthly king would be a tyrant like those that had oppressed them for centuries, unlike their God Who delivered them time and again from brutish kings.

Saul was God’s sovereign response to their coveting after a king.

For those that seek comfort and delight in the sovereignty of God and His absolute predestination, the fact that for years Israel encountered numerous foul kings and finally pleaded to have one for themselves is not strange. Neither is it out of harmony with the ways of Jehovah. Consider: were there first no king Saul, given in God’s anger, there would follow no king David, the man after God’s own heart. It must be remembered too, the order in Scriptures is always, first the natural, then the spiritual. The first man was Adam, a natural man. The second was Jesus, the spiritual man. Even so, Saul, the first king was in temperament, natural, whereas David, despite his faults, was spiritual. So much so, David was among the more prominent figures of Christ in all the Old Testament. The New Testament opened with: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1.1).” Though chronologically Abraham lived many years before David, the emphasis was, Jesus was King David’s son. Even stronger evidence of the divine plan is when the generation of Christ is given. “And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias (Matthew 1.6).” The significance of this text cannot be overlooked. Here, twice, the Scripture, written under the inspiration of the Spirit, refers to David as David the king. What makes this so pronounced is, David is the only one of this lengthy accounting of Christ to be described as a king. Is this mere coincidence? Was not Solomon a king? And Roboam; Asa; Josaphat, and on and on? Surely they were, but in the perfect plan of God, Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, would be

associated with, and proceed from, David the king. And, remember, it was David that ascended the throne after God removed Saul, the king of His anger.

Thus we have given a brief introduction to the transition from a theocentric government in Israel to the rulership of kings chosen from the sons of men. Saul was to be first.

KING SAUL

Only once in the New Testament is Saul, king of Israel, mentioned. Considering the frequency David is mentioned, this alone makes the fact noteworthy. This single mention says much to us of his transitional status. We give the text from the book of Acts: “And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus (Acts 13.19-23).” Several points of importance are worth notice in this text. First, mention is made of Israel’s desire to have a king. Second, it is perfectly clear, the king they got was the king God gave them. There was no election or show of hands except the election and show of God’s hand. Third, Saul held this eminent position exactly so long as pleased the Lord, for at the appointed time He removed him. “Uneasy lies the crown upon the head.”

Should any object to our conclusion that this removal occurred at the appointed time, we ask; at what other time did God remove Saul if not at the appointed time? Can we believe with any comfort whatever that our great God might just as well have removed Saul at one time as another? It seems plausible to us, if God had been somehow stirred (as Conditionalist speculation would have it) to remove Saul as king He would have cut him loose years earlier than waiting a full forty years. During that time Saul continually made attempts on the life of David, from whose loins came Jesus our Lord and King (Romans 1.3). Finally, there was detailed mention in the text of God’s raising up David to the throne. Particular attention will be given to this point in another article.

No sooner had the elders of Israel demanded from Samuel a king than Samuel prayed unto the Lord. Following the Lord’s answer to Samuel to hearken unto the people, he apprised them of the tragic state of affairs sure to follow. “And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.. .(I Samuel 8.10ff).” Contained in his recitation was both predictable and not-so-predictable events to transpire when they got an earthly king to judge them. Their king would take their sons for himself, for his chariots, for his horsemen. The king would appoint captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; he would set them to ear his ground. They would reap his harvest, make his instruments of war, and instruments of chariots.

The king would take their daughters. They would be confectionaries, cooks, bakers. The king would take the people’s fields, vineyards, oliveyards, even the best of them. This new king would as well take the menservants, maidservants, and the goodliest young men; the asses would be confiscated and put to his work. He would take the tenth of their sheep. Finally, they would be his servants.

These shameful things were not predictable in the eyes of the people, for they no doubt thought such things could not happen at the hand of one of their own. Besides, they were relying on Samuel to come up with a first class king for them.

But – these things were fully predictable, for God had given them to Samuel to recite to his people. Thus, they were as certain as the holiness and veracity of God Himself. Again, we say, predestination was the fountain from whence came these certainties. It is a pitiful crutch Arminians lean on when they say God simply saw how things would be, therefore He told Samuel in advance what He “learned” by looking into the future. If God sees (learns) something by looking into the future, something He otherwise knew not, then God, by looking, has improved and enlarged His wisdom and total knowledge. Thus, he knows more after looking than He did before. Hence, God changed for the better. (God would be learning by looking.) Dear readers, as sure as all things are naked and open before God, just that sure the future is as well. We take that to mean nothing can put on any other dress, nor can any event hide itself from eternal wisdom, for all is encompassed in the mind and will of God – from everlasting to everlasting. God never changes – for the better or the worse. He is our constant, unchanging God. We say respectfully and in fear, God is perfection, or He is nothing. This the Arminian and Conditionalist mind cannot comprehend or fathom – they have no conception of what both God and His Bible reveal of Himself.

On concluding the catalog of events that would befall Israel under an earthly king, Samuel told them “...ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day (I Samuel 8.18).” So, how did they react to all Samuel prophesied to them? “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us (I Samuel 8.19).”

It may be easy for us to shake our heads in scorn for these foolish Israelites and condemn their folly. Remember, but for grace we too would lust after earthly monarchs, and spurn the wisdom of heaven.

Another amazing, sad aspect of the people asking for an earthly king, one with infirmities like their own, was they already had a king, Jehovah. With Him, none of these awful things would happen to them. God did not demand their sons and daughters to enhance His stature. He would never appropriate their lands and livestock for His own use. The facts were, only bad things would issue when they abandoned their Heavenly King for an earthly king.

We have seen the people’s response upon receiving those dire warnings relative to an earthly king. The response, or reaction, of Samuel followed at once.

“And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord (I Samuel 8.21).” Samuel apparently listened attentively to the people. No matter how foolishly they conducted themselves in demanding a king, he was still their leader and they were still his people. When confronted with similar circumstances, we of the Old School can certainly find in Samuel’s behavior towards Israel a proper course of direction. Samuel was guided by principles only learned by Divine instruction. Notice too – Samuel did not act the part of judge or accuser in laying this matter before the Lord. No; he simply rehearsed what they said. He was no doubt of the firm opinion the Lord would handle the affair according to eternal wisdom. Was not all this transpiring even as the will of God had determined? It would be folly to suggest this transpired by random chance. There are no alternate possibilities we know of, and feel reasonably certain no one else does either.

The response of God certainly poses some grounds for serious reflection and prayerful consideration. “And the Lord said to Samuel. Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city (I Samuel 8.22).” This was the third time God had instructed Samuel to “hearken” unto the voice of the people. The first was in verse 7, then again in verse 9, and now this final time after the people had been informed of the grave consequences of their determination to have a king.

“Hearken unto their voice” was a clear, positive directive from God consenting to the demands of the people, even though certain harm would result to them. Some may think God finally “gave in” to the lusts of the people or maybe He even had a change of heart. At best, such sentiments are absurd. They are also completely out of harmony with the Scriptural account of our God. If these things seem incongruous, if they lie far beyond our capacity to comprehend, does that permit us to conclude God is somehow less a God than He has described Himself to be? We find the answer to that question when God is pleased to reveal a small portion of His wisdom to us. Consider the words of the Psalmist: “Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies (Psalm 106.43-45).” The people provoked Him with their counsel!

Yes, mysterious as it may seem, God was provoked. Their counsel, the aggregate decision of the elders and consent of the multitude, was to have a king. So, “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath (Hosea 13.11).” Clearly, God was provoked and was angry. Still, God forsook them not. Though He brought the people low for their iniquity, they were not utterly cast away. Nor could they be. They were His covenant people, and as such would feel the tender mercies of their Father as surely as they would feel His anger. Such is in part the meaning of the words, “Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.” “Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand (Job 26.14)?”

God also “repented according to the multitude of his mercies.” This does not mean repentance in the manner the Arminian clergy would urge men to repent. God had trespassed against no one. When God repents it is a turning from one course of action to another with whomever He is dealing. It is not a change of mind or heart for that would be inconstant with His unchangeable nature. In this case God repented according to the multitude of his mercies. Since His mercies are everlasting and are sure, then we may safely conclude His repentance was as certain as His mercy.

“And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.” The God of Israel had consented to the petition of His people. Samuel was to make them a king. For the present, he bid them to go home. This signified the Lord would make the thing known in due time. They knew it not, but at that very time their future king was being prepared. He was Saul.

And so, the season for a fleshly, visible king in Israel had come. No longer would they walk by faith; they must gaze upon the princely head of one of their own. From king Solomon we read these words: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Ecclesiastes 3.1).” Moreover, “Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou (Ecclesiastes 8.4)?” If the Lord enables, we shall contemplate the import of these texts as they regard our subject, but in due order.

In our next in this series we shall, the Lord willing, examine the beginnings of one of the most complex characters in the Bible. Saul has, to many, been the source of much consternation. Was he among the elect or was he not? May the Lord give us needed light and understanding as we contemplate the man and his appointed mission. The time of the kings would begin with Saul, but they would certainly not end there.

The Remnant

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Number 17

I SAMUEL – SAUL: THE FIRST OF THE KINGS IN ISRAEL

“Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people (I Samuel 9.1,2).”

In our article No. 16 in this series we introduced the beginning of the kings in the Scriptures. Notwithstanding all the calamities that befell Israel at the hands of neighboring kings about them, they demanded that God give them a flesh and blood king; a king from among their tries. And so He did! “I gave thee a king in mine anger (Hosea 13.11).”

We now examine, in the light of predestination, the life of Saul, the king God gave Israel in His anger.

SAUL: THE EARLY YEARS

The beginning

Kish, the father of Saul was said to be a mighty man of power. This should not be construed to mean that he was a man of influence and position among the tribes. Rather, as Saul indicated to Samuel on their first meeting, his family was the least of all the families of all the tribes (I Samuel 9.21). Thus, it is noteworthy that God was pleased to choose a man from among the least likely, by human reasoning, of all the families of Israel. However, despite their insignificance and meager influence among the 12 tribes, God had set apart Saul to ascend a throne among his people, a throne that as yet did not even exist. It was not simple coincidence that Saul was, at the same time Israel was clamoring for a king, the supreme candidate to fill the position, at least from human perspective.

According to the text, Saul was a choice young man; he was goodly; no son of Israel was goodlier than he. Furthermore, his physical frame distinguished him from all others, in that, “from his shoulders upward he was higher than any of the people.” Was it a quirk of nature that caused Saul to be so tall, so choice and goodly? For our part, we think not. From eternity, Saul had his being, with all its excellent qualities, determined by God who had fashioned him for this very position.

There are those that vehemently oppose our views on this point. We ask; did not God create the waster to destroy (Isaiah 54.16)? Did not His hand form the crooked serpent (Job 26.13)? Did not God, by purpose, raise up Pharaoh to show His power in him (Romans 9.17)? Then why should it be thought a thing incredible that God would raise up Saul? Surely He did, and surely it was on purpose, and just on time, we may add!

Seeking lost asses

“And the asses of Kish Saul’s father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses (I Samuel 9.3).” This first mention of Saul’s activities is considerably revealing. His father put him in charge of his lost asses! Here we immediately see the contrast between Saul, Israel’s first king, and David, Israel’s second king. Saul is seen tending his

father's asses. The first mention of David reveals to us him tending his father's sheep. A wider contrast could hardly be imagined. One only needs to consider the various mentions of asses and sheep throughout the Scriptures to develop a revealing picture of these two kings. It is worth mention that at the outset of Saul's record, their property, asses, were somehow lost. Surely this family can only be considered careless, at the best. When this episode is compared to the mention of David tending his father's sheep, several things are worth observing:

First, when Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king of Israel, David was not there with the rest of the family. "And he [Samuel] sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice (I Samuel 16.5)." Whatever the reason, David was away tending the sheep. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep (I Samuel 16 .11)." The point to contemplate is this: The sheep were important enough that David would not suffer the loss of them by assembling with the rest of the family, even for this momentous occasion. Again, after Saul had called David to his court to play the harp and be Saul's armourbearer, upon returning home it was "to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem (I Samuel 17.15)." And second, when Jesse would send David to his brethren at the war front, his extreme care for his father's sheep is once again paramount. "And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him... (I Samuel 17.20)."

The contrast is indisputable; Saul was occupied with his father's lost asses when the record begins. David was faithfully tending his father's sheep at the outset of his account.

Leaving the comparison for now, we return to that doctrine which threads together all the events of this story as well as all other stories; the predestination of all things. It was no freak event of nature that brought Saul into the world in the family of Kish, his natural father. It was not a random selection from the genetic pool of Adam's family that caused the carelessness of Kish and Saul in losing their asses. Nor was it an incidental alignment of the stars in space that prodded Saul's footsteps along the path after his lost asses at the very time he would cross trails with Samuel. Those reading the account of Saul and Samuel must either stand with rank fatalism or blessed predestination when assimilating the catalog of events. Arminianism may breed a million questions respecting the development of the events of time, but for believers, predestination answers them all with full satisfaction.

So Saul and his servant set out to reign in the lost asses. Shortly, they were so far from home without good results that Saul recommended returning: "Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us (I Samuel 9.5)." It was precisely then that evidences begin to manifest themselves that this journey after lost asses on the part of Saul was more than that. It was the Lord leading him to Samuel in fulfillment of His promise to give the tribes of Israel a king. How wondrous it is to see the hand of God in such seemingly insignificant events. Saul and his servant were at the far reaches of their endeavor to recover the asses. They were, at the urging of Saul, ready to shuffle home empty-handed; failures in keeping the asses and failures in recovering them when lost. This is not the fellow most would select to lead a nation. But God did!

The scene brightened a bit. The servant of Saul, apparently much more eager to accomplish the task before them, offered some salient advice. "And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go (I Samuel 9.6)." True enough, the servant's language was shot through with conditional sentiment, but he was, nevertheless, desirous to seek out success. Unless the servant had some prior knowledge of Samuel, and where the prophet resided, we

cannot explain where he got his information, other than by God's own prompting. What is important to see is, no link is missing in the chain leading to the finalization of God's purposes. Nothing could thwart Saul's ordained rendezvous with Samuel. Saul was certain to become king in Israel.

Saul, ever negative, even from the outset, argues in fashion typical of the flesh: "But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we (I Samuel 9.7)?" The language of Saul is strikingly familiar to those of us that have also questioned the outcome of an event due to our lack. As events progress with the purpose of God in the life of Saul it will be clearly seen that he has always, more or less, afflicted with a lack of understanding the ways of providence. "What have we?" fairly well sums up the attitude of this future king.

In I Samuel 9.8 the servant of Saul informs him that he possesses "the fourth part of a shekel of silver." A meager sum indeed! But there is beauty where the eye of faith examines the ground and never more than here. From a human perspective the determination to seek out Samuel, or to go home, hung in the balance of ability to compensate the Seer. Saul, the master, had nothing to offer. The unnamed servant, however, for whatever reason, had this small portion he brought along. Moreover, he was willing, even when no doubt tired and cranky, to give it up to see this project of Saul's father Kish through to the end. The parsons of free will may tell us they turned over a stone of luck or good fortune, but we recognize the stone as the Rock of our salvation under which will be found the truth of predestination. Ask this question: which persuasion brings God the most glory, luck or predestination? Then ask again: which one comforts your soul the most, good fortune or predestination?

Verses 10 through 13 of I Samuel 9 continues the events leading Saul to Samuel. One event is worth additional observation. "And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water (Verse 11)." Those who are familiar with the record of the Lord's dealings with Israel will recall how this parallels the journeys of several other members of the family of faith. There was Eliezer, servant of Abraham, experiencing the same when on his journey to find a bride for Isaac (Genesis 24.10-27). There was also Jacob, arriving in the land of the East, meeting Rachel in very similar circumstances (Genesis 29.1-12).

Moses had the same experience when he fled the king of Egypt. He came to the well where the priest of Midian's seven daughters approached to draw water (Exodus 2.16-20). In each of these instances, meeting the maidens at a well of water was a necessary component in accomplishing the purpose for which the sojourner sought. "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps (Proverbs 16.9)"

Meeting Samuel

The journey to recover the lost asses was interrupted so Saul and his servant might learn from the seer the way they should go. Any hope of recovery must be from a source outside of oneself. Saul and his servant were completely unaware what scenes awaited them, but go they must. They had gone as far as they could on their own. How beautiful to see that even at this time of seeming distress and indecision, God had marked out the events for Saul. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Ecclesiastes 3.1)." The season for you to expend his time and effort to recover those asses to be lost had come and gone. The season for Saul to expend his time and effort to recover those asses had also come and had gone. Now was the season to encounter Samuel. God on the throne had

just as surely brought all the events together in season as He is God. These events were a part of the “every purpose under the heaven.”

Although Saul was surprised by what transpired. Samuel certainly was not. The record speaks: “And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place. Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me (I Samuel 9.14-16).” If God has given us eyes to see, there is much here in this passage at which to wonder. Among the wonders are the holy purposes of God. Unhumbled Arminians cannot see those purposes for they can see no farther than the present moment. If they could see beyond the moment they would not be Arminians. God sees all: past and present and future. God sees all for He has ordered all! Did He not tell Samuel that He, God, would send a man out of the land of Benjamin? View the events with the natural eye and you see these dumb brutes, the asses of Kish, wandering away. If from carelessness on the part of Saul, or Kish, or the servants, it matters nothing; the asses left, for so they must. Why else would Saul, at that very time, journey off so far from home? And why would the asses wander so far? What else but to bring together those God had appointed to meet so Israel might have their king. To the natural eye all this is but an insignificant particle from the uncontrolled innumerable events evolving through meaningless time unto an unknown and undetermined destiny. The carnal mind views this and all the rest of God’s good order as appearing and disappearing vapors that simply chase away as if they had never really happened. Random chance happenings unfurling with aimless abandon ending in remorseless nothingness is the best man’s wisdom can make of this episode, or any other, apart from the revelation from God that there was an eternal plan. By His grace we stand with the plan and leave fate, fortune and undetermined destiny to Satan, Arminians, Conditionalists, and assorted other God haters.

“Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin.” One does not need the insight of Nostradamus to conclude that these events were settled, both in heaven and in earth. They must come to pass exactly as they did. The asses could not linger a few more days before leaving the homestead, nor would they amble off a second sooner than they did. They were precisely on time, for the other figures in this drama, Samuel and Saul, must be where the God of heaven would have them to be at the appropriate moment. “Tomorrow.” Saul would not arrive the day after tomorrow: Saul would be there tomorrow. If Saul could have somehow given up the chase for the asses and returned home in disgust, where would be the promise of God to Samuel that “Tomorrow about this time...”? We challenge the world to explain how Saul could have done other than what he did. Explain to us how the asses could have done other than what they did also. God had said tomorrow and so it was. If it be conceded that this was all according to the plan and purpose of God, then we ask, what events are not according to God’s plan and purpose? If dumb asses and unsuspecting servants are employed by our Father to bring Saul to Samuel, then why is it thought a thing impossible for God to do consistently likewise in all the other events of time and eternity? Has He not the power? Is it not so that He “doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou (Daniel 4.35)?”

“Tomorrow.” The word leads us to another avenue of grand truth. Jehovah had assured Samuel that before the sun set the following day the new king of Israel would be sent to him. Be assured, our God does not speak carelessly, as after the manner of fallen creation. Sooner could tomorrow’s sun fail to

rise than God's word could or would fail. Do you believe that? If that is so then consider the ramifications, for they are multitudinous. Nothing could prevent this meeting tomorrow. Saul could not change his mind. A band of roving thieves could not assail him, leaving him to die, thus aborting God's plan. Simply put, there could be nothing, no circumstance or set of circumstances, that might prevent Saul from being sent to Samuel, not even death.

According to free-willers and their Conditionalist cousins, man might die at any time. There is no fixed time for our lives to terminate, say they. In harmony with that line of (un)reasoning, Saul might have just as well swallowed a gnat and strangled to death the night before he was to meet Samuel. Then what of God's purposes? We need not list the variables. They are without number. Either God has a will, and brings it to pass, together with all the infinite details, or fate, black, remorseless fate sweeps away particulars and fragments of an orderless universe and brings all to stark uncertainty. Surely, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision (Psalm 2.4)."

Saul would, and Saul did, meet with Samuel. Had this event failed then might we be driven to despair and endless woe; for in what then could we trust? If Samuel, this man appointed to serve and witness to the people of the greatness of God, could not trust God at His word, then where would this leave poor sinners now? Rejoice, brethren! God's word was and is sure. The meeting took place, for so had God willed. It is fair to say that if God willed then He predestinated (fixed the destiny beforehand) it."

"And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! This same shall reign over my people (I Samuel 9.17)" is it not marvelous? Tomorrow had come. Saul had arrived. Samuel was at the appointed spot. God spoke: "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of!" The works of the God we worship were wonderfully displayed.

Ye servants of your God, his fame
In songs of highest praise proclaim;
Ye who, on his commands intent,
The courts of Israel's Lord frequent;

Him praise – the everlasting King,
And mercy's unexhausted spring:
Haste, to his name your voices rear;
What name like his the heart can cheer?

Thy greatness, Lord, my thoughts assest,
With awful gratitude impress'd,
Nor know, among the seats divine,
A power that shall contend with thine:

Merrick

No. 13, Beebe Selection

With this we take leave of the subject of Saul, the first of the kings of Israel. If the Lord blesses, we shall explore the continuing events from I Samuel 9 with an eye again towards the predestination of God that made all possible.

The Remnant

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I SAMUEL – SAUL: THE FIRST OF THE KINGS IN ISRAEL

And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! This same shall reign over my people (1 Samuel 9.17).

SAUL AND SAMUEL

God's purposes for Israel would be manifest in a unique manner to the twelve tribes. A new form of government would replace the old. No longer would Judges rule the twelve tribes. Samuel was the last Judge. He had occupied the seat of rule all his life (1 Samuel 7.15), but, beginning with Saul, the reigns of power would reside with the kings.

Saul was the first, and probably the most complex of the kings of Israel. Saul was chosen by God to occupy the throne. Any possibility he would decline, or fail to rule his appointed time did not exist. Despite the notions of limited Predestinarians and assorted other Arminians, nothing fails in the eternal plan of God. That unfailing plan embraces all things. If such possibilities did exist, we challenge the world to produce evidence from the Bible that the choice of Saul by God could be nullified. God said, "This same (Saul) shall reign over my people." That, dear readers, settled it! God clearly, without a trace of ambiguity, foretold the rule of Saul. Therefore, every possible event since the dawn of time that could in any way affect, to the slightest degree, the rule of Saul, must be equally as sure as God's pronouncement saying Saul would reign. How else could God speak in certainty unless the events he foretold were certain?

Examples for the necessity of continuity in all transpiring events, from the beginning to Saul's actual reign as king over Israel, abound. We offer one.

Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the last of the sons of Jacob and second son of Rachel, Joseph being the first. Lovely Rachel, the darling of Jacob, travailed hard in labor when Benjamin was born (Genesis 35.16). In fact, she died. Those blessed to see the predestination of God in all things know that was the set time for Rachel to die. It was as ordained as the rising of the sun. Some deny there is a set time to die. To them Rachel might have died sooner, or even later, than when she did. This they affirm constantly. As far as they are concerned, Rachel might have died when delivering Joseph her first son as when she did. No predestination, say they, and thus no certainty. Well then, we shall ask, had Rachel died while delivering Joseph, a real possibility with no predestination to make anything certain, there would be no Benjamin, would there? And, neither would there be a Saul that God had declared would reign. This is the same as saying God either changed or did not know of what He affirmed.

This is but one of millions of interlinking events that renders the pronouncement of God relating to Saul a certainty.

Persons often exclaim they would never serve in public office, no matter what the populace desired. Concerning Saul, there was no public clamor to have him for Israel's king. Israel panted after a king, true enough, but they did not make the selection of Saul. God made the choice. He determined,

promoted, and secured all to occupy this seat of power. His government governs all governments. This includes the grubby local official and the mightiest monarch. All alike are under the control and sway of God. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Romans 13.1).” We marvel how some dare complain against God, rejecting His ruling the affairs of men. Is there not far more blessed comfort knowing He superintends the affairs of men “for good to those that love Him” than to fear every moment that matters may suddenly rage out of control? So they might without predestination.

It is charged, and that falsely, Predestinarians carry their doctrine too far. It is said our pronouncements range far too excessive for the sensitive ears of modern religionists. If so, we insist, let our accusers show us precisely where to stop. Let them, our opponents, mark before us the line they have found, anywhere in the Bible, at which we are to stop. “Possibly” some will say, “God did govern the affairs of Israel then, and to some extent today, but He does not extend His sway and dominion to include the unwholesome [whatever that is] events of life.” Let us see! “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men (Daniel 4.17).” If that text does not reveal God’s rule is all encompassing, what would it take to satisfy our critics? Shall they draw the line short of this text and admonish us not to pass? They deny heaven’s edicts at their peril. More need not be said, especially for those that reverence the Word of God.

“Behold the man whom I spake to thee of!” Even wise Samuel needed prompting by God that this man Saul, standing before him, was to be king of Israel. Samuel was wise and discerning, but he, like all fallen sons of Adam, derived his understanding of the affairs of God from God.

SAUL MEETS SAMUEL

There are many fascinating examples in Scriptures of encounters between prominent servants of God with those whom God purposed for them to meet. None are more engaging than our present. Samuel, the last judge of Israel, had grown old. The tribes of Israel had grown restless; they were weary (wrongfully) of a theocentric government, a disposition sadly complementing all human nature. As for Saul, he was growing up in his father’s household, and from appearances, primarily occupied with tending his father’s asses. Under the unerring guidance of God, these three, Israel, Samuel, and Saul met in conformity to the eternal will for their corresponding and intertwined futures.

“And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! This same shall reign over my people (1 Samuel 9.17).” Samuel was previously informed of Saul’s coming and thus God revealed him unto Samuel as the appointed king to rule over “my people.” There is comfort in those words, my people, when applied to the heart by the Spirit of God. My people speaks loudly of the peculiar relation accorded the chosen of God as distinct from all other people.

The nations about Israel, the Philistines, the Egyptians, and all others, were as much the created people of God as Israel, but never are they denominated my people. “And they shall be my people, and I will be their God (Jeremiah 32.38).” This set the tone for coming relations between Saul and the tribes over which he would rule. He would rule them, but they would ever remain the people of God.

It is significant to see, while Samuel knew Saul when first they met, for the Lord told him who he was, Saul was totally ignorant of this exalted servant of God, even when in his presence. “Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer’s house is (1 Samuel 9.18).”

Saul was in the presence of Samuel for only one reason, at least as far as he was concerned; he sought information to enable him in finding his lost asses. Remarkable indeed; God had chosen to lead and rule His people this grown man that was completely unaware when in the presence of Samuel, God's most highly favored man among the tribes. But the tide that swept Saul into the presence of Samuel was not simply the flow of unrelated events in uncharted waters. The ordained occasion had arrived. God was to invest the temporal rule of affairs with a carnal king. He had from eternity chosen a lowly ass-herder, Saul, who, at that time was in futile pursuit of his lost asses. And God put Samuel in his path. "And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart (1 Samuel 9.19)."

KNOWLEDGE

"Tell thee all that is in thine heart." Who can accomplish such apart from the Spirit of God? Samuel would apprise Saul of everything necessary to fully establish God was superintending this transition. This is one of many instances in Scriptures where a prophet of God revealed things otherwise unknown. With the exception of skeptics and God haters, we know of no Bible students that question the revelation of things unknown by those anointed prophets of God. In chapters nine and ten of 1 Samuel there are at least nine instances where Samuel revealed unto Saul proceedings that could not be learned or foretold with ordinary human discernment. I-tad there been only an item or two, we might conclude Samuel held this high position by personal shrewdness. We shall briefly examine these pronouncements and therein behold, not the wisdom and knowledge of Samuel, but pf God.

Ask yourself this one question in reviewing what Samuel revealed to Saul: how did Samuel know all this? We hope to answer that question subsequently.

1. "And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them: for they are found...Samuel 9.20)." Saul had not mentioned how long the asses were lost. In fact, Saul told Samuel nothing. Nevertheless, Samuel unveils the unknown. Moreover, Samuel sets the mind of Saul at ease; he assures him the asses are found. How did Samuel come by these facts? Clever guessing? Enchantments? Absurd! Samuel, the servant of God, was given this knowledge directly from God (verses 15 and 16).

2. "... And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee and on all thy father's house (1 Samuel 9.20)?" Samuel took no polls. He had no time to visit among the tribes. To arrive at the conclusion the whole nation desired Saul required knowledge beyond normal. In fact, the whole of the nation did not know they desired Saul to reign. But Samuel related it to Saul as a fact. Why? God told him so, and clearly that was good enough for Samuel. It is good enough for the elect today as well. We will appraise the evident truth to which this conclusion leads later.

3. "And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God (1 Samuel 9.27)." Nothing specific is here given but the statement of Samuel establishes a foundation for all that transpires between him and Saul; that which passed from the Judge to the future king was nothing less than the very word of God. "That I may shew thee the word of God." This statement alone is sufficient to raise our inquiry from that of knowledgeable men to the knowledge of God.

What Samuel unfolded to Saul was eternal; it was settled forever. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119.89)." Every syllable uttered by the aged judge was as settled, certain and sure as

the foundations of God's eternal throne. Samuel surely knew these things. Did Samuel's knowing them make them sure? No, but he could not have known them unless they were sure. Otherwise they would be no better than vain speculation.

Parenthesis: "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head and kissed him, and said...Samuel 10.1)." It is worthy of notice, Samuel anointed Saul from a vial of oil. When he later anointed David in Saul's place he used a horn of oil (1 Samuel 16.13). See Revelation 15.7 and the whole of Revelation, Chapter 16.

4. "When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son (1 Samuel 10.2)?" This verse weaves together such complex and intricate involvement by so many persons it is impossible to believe Samuel could dream this up. For all to come to pass exactly as he foretold it without some measure of Divine certainty to bring it to pass is incredulous. Five people in three different locations are involved in one brief statement; Samuel, Saul, two unnamed men, and Saul's father. Circumstances, distance and time forbid a conspiracy or a fraud by Samuel. The exact location, some good distance away, is fully given. The exact language of the two men Samuel affirmed Saul would encounter is declared. The mind and disposition of Saul's anxious father is cataloged as fact. Who but the willfully blind can view this text and fail to see Divine certainty, Divine will, Divine predestination abounding? Saul had no pet theories or personal agenda to promote. The aged judge recited the word of God to Saul just as the Lord had bid him. Would he find out later God Himself was only speculating, or did all come to pass in flawless agreement with the disclosure? We shall see.

5. "Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine: And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands (1 Samuel 10.3,4)." The old judge not only speaks of events of the present day at Rachel's sepulchre, he speaks of the further activities of Saul with such detail we must marvel. We are struck with wonder at the vivid display of the predestination of God in Samuel's words. Can the accuracy of all coming to pass, as foretold by Samuel, be accounted for by other measures? Surely not! Either Samuel knew these things were as positive as God's revelation of them to him, or he was the "luckiest" guesser the world ever saw.

How could Samuel say Saul would "go on forward from thence" unless it was sure? Could Samuel know the mind of Saul? Could he accurately forecast Saul's movements with nothing more than human discernment? Certainly not!

Should the reader be weary of our pattern here they might as well close the paper without reading further. This is our meat and drink. The deep ways of God's revealing His mind are far more satisfying than the stiffly structured appeals of Conditionalists aimed at bringing the Baptists up from the dunghill.

We continue: Samuel unfolds a remarkably complex series of events no human could formulate without divine aid. Saul would go to the plain of Tabor. Why there? Because it was the word of the Lord to Samuel. There Saul would meet three men (not two or four, but three) going up (not returning) to God to Beth-el. Samuel told the son of Kish not only where he would go, but how many persons he would meet, and where. This is grounds of holy rejoicing for those weary of false prophets. Samuel told Saul

where the three were going themselves; to Beth-el. Marvelous as all this is, Samuel yet wove more threads of wisdom into this coat of many colors. According to the judge, one of the three going up to Beth-el would be carrying three kids. This in itself seems a hefty load, but so it would be, for Samuel had divine authority to say so. The second would be carrying three loaves of bread. We can be sure Samuel was no Conditionalist. Otherwise he would have said that the fellow would be carrying three loaves of bread, unless perchance, he got hungry, gobbled up a portion on the way, before Saul reached him and deprived him the portion the Lord said was his. The third fellow of Samuel's prophecy would be carrying a bottle of wine.

Reader, ask yourself, is all this, apart from the knowledge of God, beyond the capacity of man to foretell with such detail and accuracy or not?

There was more. "And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands (1 Samuel 10.4)." How can Samuel possibly know the disposition and liberality of these men? At the time of this incident the prospects of such liberality to a stranger were minimal. Yet, Samuel cites all this with the penetrating authority of one who knew exactly of what he spoke.

It must be acknowledged by all with common sense and a reasonable fear of God, the knowledge of Samuel in these events was such that the Lord alone could surpass it in detail and accuracy.

6. "After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy (1 Samuel 10.5)." Surely Samuel believed it was "...not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jeremiah 10.23)." Here was no license to walk any uncertain way, but rather, a "thou shalt come" punctuated the prophecy of the old judge. Moreover, Samuel was cognizant of the position of the Philistine forces. This shows he had understanding of activities of both the enemies of God and the people of God equally. We can only conclude, those Philistine forces could have overturned the foundations of the world or snatched the sun from its orbit as soon as they could have relocated, thereby falsifying the word of Samuel to Saul relative to their whereabouts.

History vividly furnishes through the centuries the imperative nature of timing in the conduct of every activity. We need not elaborate. In this instance, Saul was to meet a company of prophets. If there was even a measure of truth in Conditionalism, these prophets might have failed to arrive on time. A bad night's sleep could have roused them earlier than planned and thus the meeting would not occur. On the other hand, Saul, being a tall individual, might have traveled somewhat faster than Samuel anticipated, being long-legged, and arrived prior to the arrival of the company of prophets. Without predestination this would be a very real possibility, and, try as they may, Conditionalists cannot deny it. Such is a sample of the fruit of all conjectures where predestination is discounted.

"...with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them." The details with which Samuel outlines Saul's immediate future are amazing. There could be no deviation; Saul would encounter these things; no more, and no less! When we consider this is the pattern of the entire Bible, the predestination of all events can be our only conclusion. And why not? Nothing more exalts God than the doctrine of His absolute Sovereignty.

7. "And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man (1 Samuel 10.6)." Hearken, brethren! We have entered a new dimension. Thus far Samuel prophesied of matters concerning men. Here, however, he conveyed to Saul intelligence

about heaven itself. Samuel could not possibly relate this matter unless the wisdom and knowledge of God had been settled prior to Samuel foretelling it. As we develop these verses it becomes more and more apparent, all Samuel had told Saul was based upon concrete intelligence; the sure knowledge of things to come based on the eternal decrees. Can it be otherwise?

8. “And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee (1 Samuel 10.7).” To a casual reader, this verse might appear to present considerable latitude for Saul in the form of freewill. In context, however, and with the magnitude of the person of God considered, no such latitude exists. Even the possibility vanishes as a vapor in a gale.

That these dramatic signs would come upon Saul, none may deny, unless they believe Samuel orated absent of God’s authority. As for the expression “let it be,” the simple motive with Samuel was obvious; he instructs Saul that opposition or objection to the will of God is useless. “Let it be, Saul.” Struggle is useless! “Do as occasion serve thee” is similar. Saul is encouraged to simply remain passive. Saul will not serve the occasion; the occasion will serve Saul. Why? “For God is with thee.” How then, could he do contrarily?

9. “And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do (1 Samuel 10.8).” Should an ordinary individual attempt to divine the future, as did Samuel, they would at once be branded as an audacious fool or even worse. Either prescience or presumption must have driven the pronouncements of this verse.

Samuel could not possibly have known the events of the following seven days apart from divine direction. That is exactly what we believe led Samuel to recite all this intelligence to Saul. Could a humble believer in the Lamb of God see these statements and not conclude they emanated from an eternal plan and not the carnal planning of mortals?

“And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day (1 Samuel 10.9).” Stamp predestination across the whole scroll of Samuel’s communications to Saul. No sooner had Samuel done speaking than the inspired word records “And it was so!” Heaven itself sanctioned the volume. This we have forevermore; Samuel spoke with authority for he knew of what he spoke. Lest someone cringe away from our conclusion and view it with suspicion, we once again emphasize the close of the verse. “And all those signs came to pass that day.” What Samuel foretold and what came to pass were one and the same.

If the Lord may be pleased we shall compare the knowledge of Samuel as it related to Saul with the knowledge of God relating to the same in our next issue. Our ultimate purpose is to establish that the knowledge of God and the predestination of God embrace the same things and so are equal.

The Remnant

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II SAMUEL – DAVID:

THE SECOND OF THE KINGS IN ISRAEL AND MEPHIBOSHETH

“And David said unto him, Fear not, for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually (II Samuel 9.7).”

Predestination from Genesis to Revelation is not at all difficult to see for those who have been made to love a sovereign God. For all others it is probably foolishness. In this series of articles, we have attempted to set forth God’s determination of all events, both in time and eternity. This determination of all events we call absolute predestination. By this definition, we mean that God has determined all events before they come to pass. If so, God’s will and pleasure can never fail.

These Old Testament events from which we write are figures of those things declared to us in the New Testament. Call them types, shadows, figures, or pictures; all the events of the Old Testament lead us, in some measure, to a fuller view of the great work of redemption. We shall now examine the remarkable story of one such event: David’s kindness to Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth.

Events leading up to II Samuel 9

Saul was the first king of Israel. God then rejected him (I Samuel 15.26ff) for David (I Samuel 16.1). According to Acts 13.21, Saul reigned for 40 years. When Saul died in battle (I Samuel 31.1-6), three of his sons, Abinadab, Melchi-shua, and Jonathan also died. Another son, Ish-bosheth, was made king of the 11 tribes of Israel by Abner, but his leadership was soon aborted. The house of David waxed stronger and the remainder of Saul’s house waxed weaker (I Samuel 3.1). Eventually, Abner was slain by Joab, David’s chief-of-staff. Ish-bosheth was murdered in his bed; his head was brought to David, who commanded his young men to slay Ish-bosheth’s murderers (I Samuel 4.1-12). It was a bloody and unsettled period. The transition from Saul to David produced some spectacular moments; nevertheless, all went according to the unerring plan of God.

We first read of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, in II Samuel 4.4. He was five years of age when news came that his Father, Jonathan, and his grandfather, Saul, were slain in battle. There is no mention of his mother; only the nurse that took him and fled, no doubt fearing vengeance on Saul’s household by one of his enemies. During this flight, made in haste, Mephibosheth fell. The fall resulted in lameness in both feet.

Mephibosheth was a cripple for life. The incapacitated were often considered unworthy in ancient times. They were thought to have committed some glaring sin which resulted in their infirmities. Such was the opinion of our Lord’s disciples when Jesus observed a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind (John 9.2)?” Ridiculous opinions usually produce ridiculous questions. The Lord, however, had a blessed answer for His confused followers. It applies as well to Mephibosheth as the man born blind. “Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him (John 9.3).” God had a purpose in the man being blind. It was to manifest His works in his

deliverance. God also had a purpose in the lameness of Jonathan's son. If any are too timid to call this purpose predestination, we beg of them to explain to us what it is.

Mephibosheth's affliction was part of the eternal plan of God. It was for his good and for the glory of God. Would the deniers of God's sovereignty prefer to say all this was the sad result of bad fortune in the life Mephibosheth? Consider then: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord (Zephaniah 3.12)." Just so, Mephibosheth was afflicted and poor, left alone, deserted, helpless, living out his days until deliverance came by David. Accordingly, Mephibosheth did trust in the name of his Lord at the appointed time.

David's desire to show kindness

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake (I Samuel 9.1)?" David was a great man in practically every aspect of his interesting life. Despite his great and noble qualities, David was also a bloody man of war; fierce, and often uncompromising. Many of his foes found this out to their grief. Why then, at the time of conquest, of near absolute authority over the whole realm, would David pause to show this unknown cripple his kindness? The answer is not difficult to discover. For those taught by the Lord the answer is this: God controls our affairs. We are not directed by our whims and wishes, except as they fulfill the eternal purposes of God. "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps (Proverbs 16.9)." That applies to David as well as us today. Again, "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand (Proverbs 19.21)." Though David devised, the Lord's counsel alone would prosper. We may conclude then, whatever did come to pass, was from the counsel of the Lord.

Behind the compassion of David to an unknown cripple was something far superior to sudden impulses to show momentary kindness. David's actions reveal (by illustration or figure) the very core of the elect sinner's relationship with a saving God. David had put himself under covenant obligation to Mephibosheth before the lad had ever been born. Not just once did David covenant, but at least three times he swore himself to this unknown heir. "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul (I Samuel 18.3)." "And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth, So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul (I Samuel 20.14-17)." "And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city (I Samuel 20.42)." The reader will pay due attention to the wording here: "...between my seed and thy seed for ever." And finally, "And they two made a covenant before the Lord: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house (I Samuel 23.18)."

The motive that moved David to inquire of any that remained of the house of Saul is clear. David was bound by a three-fold covenant to show kindness to the seed of Jonathan. Serious investigation respecting the necessary qualifications to receive the beneficence of David are revealing. David sought someone in particular to redeem his covenant pledge to Jonathan. What then was the first and foremost qualification necessary to receive this particular kindness from the hand of David? Simply this: one must be of the house of Saul. The covenant benefits would fall only to such as had a family tie to the

first monarch of Israel. It was someone from the house of Saul being sought out. Well-wishers, close allies, servants or neighbors need not apply. David had entered a covenant! The terms involved the seed of David and Jonathan. Seed! Let the opponents of a seed union disparage the truth if they must. It is cause for rejoicing that a greater covenant than that of David's was made to embrace the seed of the Lamb of God. "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation (Psalm 22.30)." "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand (Isaiah 53.10)." "That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Romans 9.8)." Clearly, this cannot be speaking of the fleshly seed of Isaac, for the language is "... they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God."

Ziba, Saul's servant

"And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he (II Samuel 9.2)." Ziba was a cunning fellow. With some diligent searching, most anyone can uncover his treachery and deceit. Someone, left unnamed in Scriptures, brought Ziba before David. It is probable Ziba was thought to be the best prospect for the king's kindness. David, though familiar with the house of Saul, did not recognize Ziba. It is very likely Ziba avoided public scrutiny, and for obvious reasons, as will be seen. Ziba also was well practiced in the polite platitudes of palace prevarication and polish. "Art thou Ziba?" David asks. "Thy servant is he" was the swift response of Ziba. No allegiance to Saul from Ziba at this critical juncture. In this writer's opinion, Ziba says, "I'm your man! Look no further."

David, however, looked beyond Ziba. He had not summoned servants or slaves to honor his covenant with Jonathan. The recipient of David's kindness had to be of the seed his covenant embraced, and Ziba did not fit the qualifications, no matter his intentions. Was this simply good will on the part of David? "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will (Proverbs 21.1)." Unless this text is only wasted verbiage, and may the Lord forbid, David, the king, was turned in heart whithersoever God willed. In this case, it was toward Mephibosheth, the seed of Jonathan. (Is it not amazing that Arminians can accept the wildest theories respecting free will and yet either ignore or deny the force of such texts as Proverbs 21.1?)

"And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet (II Samuel 9.3)." Ziba might well have abandoned his cunning desires, but he did not. The king's request appeared to be void of any prospects that Ziba would receive David's kindness, but Ziba had strong reason to press his personal agenda. Notice the response of Ziba, how it was colored with language detrimental to Mephibosheth. "Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet."

Did those words exhibit pity or compassion? Anyone who believes Ziba provided this information from compassion for Jonathan's poor, crippled son has not been well-schooled in the study of human nature. "A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer (Proverbs 29.19)."

Ziba clearly understood the words of David. The king would restore the estate of Saul to the remaining seed, thus Ziba could not give a fair answer. Though what he said was truth, it was designed by Ziba to

be prejudicial. The cripple was not able to handle the vast properties left by Saul, and this point Ziba would press upon David; Mephibosheth was lame on his feet.

“And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar (II Samuel 9.4).”

Several points are prominent in this response. First, the whereabouts of the seed of Jonathan was unknown to David, the very person who should know of his residence. Second, Ziba, a servant to Saul prior to the king’s death, knew exactly where Mephibosheth resided. Moreover, Ziba did not hesitate to reveal the location.

Mephibosheth was far to the north in Lo-debar, which apparently means barren, or no pasture. It seems Machir, the benefactor, was himself in poor straits. This, Ziba obviously thought, would further render Mephibosheth undesirable in the eyes of David.

How perverted are the opinions of the carnal minded. Paramount in the thinking of Ziba, however, is the necessity of keeping David and Jonathan’s crippled son apart. Ziba was prospering on the former estates of Saul, while Mephibosheth languished away in poverty and obscurity. According to verse 10, Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants under his care. The loss of Saul’s former estates would cripple Ziba financially as sure as Mephibosheth was crippled naturally. Ziba was no friend to David’s plan! Ziba had no desire for David to show kindness unless he received it.

Ziba had cast his lot into the lap but the whole disposing of the matter would be of the Lord. We shall return to the subject of Ziba shortly.

Mephibosheth summoned

“Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar (II Samuel 9.5).” Of the many expressions used throughout the Bible to indicate a bringing unto, fetched seems the most expressive. The primary meaning of the word, fetch, in our dictionary, is to go after and come back with. This is precisely what David willed, and nothing less than Mephibosheth appearing before the king would satisfy his intentions. David sent and fetched this crippled son of Jonathan. This is beautifully illustrative of our Lord gathering His elect to Himself from their awful condition. Like David, the Lord fetches.

David sent no invitation to Mephibosheth. Nor did he suggest the cripple drop by when convenient. He tendered no offer of crutches or a walking stick to assist the cripple in his journey. David determined to have Mephibosheth before him so the kindness of his covenant might be conferred. (It would take the daring of a demented devil to suggest David had anything in mind other than the personal appearance of the crippled son of Jonathan as soon as possible.) Moreover, it seems clear that Mephibosheth would come by being fetched; nothing more; nothing less. From first to last, the entire plan, and all necessary to implement the plan, flowed from the heart of David. Mephibosheth was totally passive throughout.

David sent and fetched Mephibosheth out of the house of Machir. There was no message to the cripple warning him to leave his surroundings. Modern religion might have suggested that David say, “Mephibosheth; if you will just take the first step I will meet you the rest of the way.” “Please; won’t you come now? Tomorrow’s sun may never rise. O, why not tonight?” May God be praised, no such nonsense came from David. His purposes and resolve were equal to the circumstance. David sent and fetched Mephibosheth for he was determined to show him kindness. There was no offer involved. No contingencies encumbered the issue. The only qualifications necessary for Mephibosheth to be fetched

was his seed relationship to the covenant makers. Mephibosheth had all the necessary qualifications before he was ever born. David had all the necessary resolve to bring the matter to its designed end. No conditions or probabilities here.

When David fetched Mephibosheth, he not only drew him out of the house wherein he resided, he fetched him from Lo-debar! Some rays of the resplendent glory of our deliverance shine through from this episode between David and the seed of Jonathan. Mephibosheth was fetched from Lo-debar. Just so are all the vessels of mercy, chosen in Christ before any of them were born, fetched from the waste howling wilderness of this life's sojourn. All the chosen are raised up from their Lo-debar and translated from the kingdom of darkness and despair to the marvelous kingdom of light where our King David shows us the kindness of His covenant. Surely, King Jesus has called His sons from afar! As certain as is His purposes, when our King calls, we answer.

Who can tell the unlimited number of precious sermons that have been preached from this wondrous theme? Even some in the conditional camps have recognized this as a beautiful type of the saints' heavenly calling. Sadly, however, they have not recognized the obvious threads of divine colors woven throughout the whole. If indeed this story is a figure of deliverance, then it must be so by God's approval Himself. It is doubtful any but scoffers would disagree on that point. But, if this figure has God's sanction, then could the story have unfolded any way except as it did originally? Certainly not. So then, as we view back at the major points of this story, we see their importance unfolding.

David must survive all the many dangers he encountered on coming to the throne. No David; no kindness. Jonathan must die so David could fulfill his covenant commitments. Had Jonathan survived the war with the enemy, when his brothers and his father, Saul, were slain, David would not have needed to seek out Mephibosheth. The son of Jonathan had to endure his unforeseen fall at the time his nurse sought to deliver him from any possible pursuers. Mephibosheth must become a cripple. He must become lame on his feet. Just here we pause to re-examine our thesis, that this episode is a divinely-sanctioned figure of God's delivering His covenant seed.

Question: has God sanctioned events of the Old Testament (such as the one here under consideration) to be used as types, shadows, examples, and figures? If not, we are sadly mistaken. We have then completely missed the meaning of such texts as Romans 15.4; I Corinthians 10.6 and Hebrews 8.5. Happily, most agree here. However, if this figure, where Mephibosheth becomes a fallen cripple, could somehow be another way, then did God give us figures hashed together with variables or contingencies? Was it possible that Jonathan's son not become crippled in his feet? Yes or no? If yes, then why did God give it to us this way? Moreover, would the type or figure have been complete had the lad remained whole and had not fallen, becoming a cripple? It is not difficult to see how admitting the possibility of events being any way other than they are, is to say God is not sovereign.

To take the point a step further, let the reader remember this; our conditional friends admit God predestinated our eternal salvation. They agree that Romans 8 and Ephesians 1 reveal the predestination of God in saving His people from their sins. Every circumstance necessary for that salvation is embraced in the predestinated plan. (Of course, they will attempt to extricate God from culpability respecting the sins from which He delivers His elect.) Then, we ask; why would not the types and shadows of that great salvation, as seen in the Old Testament, and as recognized by the New Testament writers, be also certain and predestinated?

How could Mephibosheth be a figure of our great deliverance if he had not fallen; if he had not been a cripple; if he had not lost his estate? On and on we might go but it can be fairly seen by those who love the Word of God that God has ordered all things. He has made them sure by His eternal predestination.

Mephibosheth before David

“Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence, And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant (II Samuel 9.6)!” Honesty compels the reader to confess that, from first to last, David directed this union of the seed of Jonathan and himself. It was David’s design, it was David’s command that brought Mephibosheth before the throne. Had this poor cripple even dreamed of seeking kindness from the new king, he could neither dare or try. Kindness, like grace, is undeserved. It flows from the will and purpose of the giver and from no other source. David here beautifully represents the eternal throne from whence flows all the kindness of heaven to miserable, fallen cripples, who, despite their condition, are heirs because they are the seed of the covenant.

Mephibosheth was come! The wording compels us to consider just how passive the cripple was when called. The text does not say Mephibosheth came, as if he were actively responding to a summons. Rather, he was come, denoting something accomplished. Accomplishments were not in Mephibosheth’s bag of tricks. No, his bag was empty.

When Mephibosheth was come unto David he fell on his face, and did reverence. This was Mephibosheth’s second fall. His first fall rendered him helpless and this fall rendered him subservient to his restorer.

Who but the blind could fail to see the beams of holy light streaming forth from this scene? This was deliverance the outcast could never even hope for until his covenant king ascended the throne, and it is questionable that he was even aware the war was over and victory belonged alone to David. But, at the appointed hour, deliverance came. Mephibosheth fell before his king. It was the time for reverence. Let the opponents of predestination inform us what portions of this lovely story they dare leave to chance or free will.

Words of Comfort

“And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually (II Samuel 9.7).”

So full is this text of the glory of God’s great salvation that we may barely touch the surface. “Fear not.” How familiar are these words to all the royal seed of Christ.

*Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismay’d!
I, I am thy God, and will still give the aid,
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

Deliverance had come. David would surely shew kindness. Was not his kindness firm as his decree? Moreover, since Mephibosheth was Jonathan’s seed, David would restore all the land of Saul to him. Such bounty could not be imagined but there it all was; simply because Mephibosheth was of the family unto whom David was pleased to show the favor of his covenant. There was more!

“And thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.” Come and dine, Mephibosheth! All things are ready. Eat at the king’s table. Make no preparations; come as you are. The kindness of the king is as complete as his will. Mephibosheth’s mind had been set at ease; his future was secured and all because of the love David and Jonathan shared. If this does not give us a complete figure from the Old Testament of our great salvation, where then must we look for it?

Back to Ziba

Mephibosheth confessed himself but a dog. David then called to Ziba, Saul’s servant and said “...I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master’s son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master’s son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants (II Samuel 9.9,10).” There could hardly be anything possible that would more crush the spirit of this squatter. Ziba was no small time beggar, bleating his case at the hearts of the charitable. No! Ziba had fared sumptuously on the estate of Saul with at least 35 able-bodied men to reap his harvests for him. Now, however, in one pronouncement from David, Ziba is back in the business of being a servant himself. It can hardly be wondered then that Ziba would one day attempt to stab the cripple in the back, for so he did (II Samuel 16.1-4).

Ziba and all his house were servants afterwards to Mephibosheth (verse 12) but Jonathan’s son “...did eat continually at the king’s table; and was lame on both his feet (II Samuel 9.13).” It cannot be only a casual repeating of the description of Mephibosheth when the chapter ends with “...and was lame on both his feet.” As a figure of the delivered sinner we see the son of Jonathan restored to favor at the king’s court and find him eating daily with the monarch. However, none of this changes the condition he acquired in his fall. He remained a cripple in the flesh. Mephibosheth would take the effects of his fall to the grave. Those readers with an understanding of the old and new man in a believer will see the significance of this.

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I KINGS – SOLOMON:

THE THIRD KING IN ISRAEL; JEROBOAM, AND REHOBOAM, THE FIRST KINGS OF A DIVIDED ISRAEL

“Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the word of the Lord (I Kings 12.23).”

IN keeping with our theme, the predestination of all things, we call the reader’s attention to the expression found in the text, “for this thing is from me.” With but a little examination it may be seen that this thing is in reference to the division of the twelve tribes of Israel into two distinct, antagonistic camps; the ten tribes of the North and the tribe of Judah, along with a portion of the tribe of Benjamin, to the South. After about 500 years of unity and solidarity, the spirit of division and strife rent asunder the families of this peculiar and chosen nation. Saul first served the tribes as king for 40 years followed by David for another 40 years. These periods were not without disagreement and lack of unity but not until the reign of Solomon, David’s son, did the seeds of discord mature and grow a crop of hostile resentment between the tribes sufficient to engender a full disruption of relations.

Jeroboam, the king of the northern tribes, and Rehoboam, king in Judah, following the division, will be the principal subjects of additional articles, with Solomon, the predominate subject now. Solomon was a leading figure in Israel and was, in many ways, a type of Christ. He was more well known than his son, Rehoboam and His counterpart to the north, Jeroboam, although they were also directly involved in the division of the twelve tribes. After a review of Solomon, specific attention shall be given to the many, seeming incidental, details of the lives and conduct of these two contemporaneous kings, with the expression, this thing is from me, as our focal point. May God’s blessed sovereignty shine forth on our efforts as a consoling beacon from first to last. A guiding text throughout this study should be as follows: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Ephesians 1.11).”

The observant reader will easily notice that the purpose of God was visibly displayed in the raising up of the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, following that, of the 12 sons of Jacob as heads of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. Next came the deliverance of the twelve tribes into Egypt, there to sojourn for over four centuries. Following that period of Israel’s development came their exodus from Egypt, the forty years wandering in the wilderness, their crossing the Jordan into the land of promise and the parceling out the land to the tribes. After the death of Joshua came the advent of the Judges to rule over the populace and finally, God gave them a king in His displeasure, Saul of Kish, a Benjamite.

Saul is replaced by David, of the tribe of Judah. From thence the extent of God’s embracing the descendants of Abraham was essentially focused on this one tribe. It would be through the tribe of Judah that God would preserve the visible kingdom until such time the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus of Nazareth, would come to His people. This is an element of profound significance! The focus of God was thus limited, from the whole of the families of Israel, until one tribe only remained in His royal

favor. Everything that transpired during the reigns of David, Solomon, Rehoboam, and even Jeroboam, was calculated by divine wisdom to converge our focus upon the sublime purpose of salvation in the King to come, Jesus our Lord, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. If we see only Solomon, Jeroboam or Rehoboam in these lines, we have missed the glory of the whole history, from first to last.

SOLOMON

Although Solomon was peculiarly unrivaled in all the history of Israel's kings, his ascent to power and supremacy was as much the appointment of God as was the ascent of those who came before. Saul, the first king, was selected immediately by the direction of God.

David, the second king, Solomon's father, was selected also by God to replace Saul, who had grievously disobeyed the Lord and thus squandered his royal position. From a natural perspective it may reasonably be said that Solomon was born to the robes of royalty and power. Viewing Solomon from the record of Scriptures, in all his qualifications and as king, it will be seen he was the product of God's eternal will.

Solomon was one of four sons of David to be born in Jerusalem by Bathsheba (see I Chronicles 3.5 where Bathsheba is called Bathshua and the other sons are named). Six other brothers were all born in Hebron and at least five of the six had different mothers. Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, was a heathen from the Hittite tribes, yet was by far the most beloved of the wives of David. Of the birth of Solomon it is recorded: "And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord love him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet: and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord (II Samuel 12.24, 25)."

Several noteworthy elements are at once manifest from this text. Beyond any delight this new born son brought David and the child's mother is the unavoidable fact the Lord loved him. This essential fact, combined with the history of this son of David and Bathsheba, at once tells us this child was an eternal darling of God; that is, God had chosen him unto Himself before the world was formed, or the dust of the mountains had been raised. Poor Arminians and assorted other Conditionalists, with considerable loathing, acknowledge God was sufficiently wise to know what Solomon would do throughout his reign, but it is a source of considerable annoyance to them when it is suggested God wisely ordained the whole of the life of Solomon. If God loved Solomon from the beginning did God also know what Solomon would do as king? "Please do not go over this ground of God's foreknowledge again" the free-willer will lament and plea. We respond, why not? If what we say is the truth about the knowledge of God, then admit it. If what we say is not the truth, then expose it as any lover of truth would.

The fact is, it will be almost universally admitted, if only by a grunt or guttural "Yes, I suppose God knew it all." Is not then this fact established, whatever God knew about the life of Solomon (and all others, as well, for that matter) was as certain as God's infinite knowledge? Can we really worship a God of limited intellect? Properly, the engagement is not about what God has predestinated. It is respecting the wisdom of God! If God knows all from all eternity, then all from eternity is sure; no matter the avenue or channel that brings it to pass. This is either a foundational truth or it is a foundational lie. Which view do you prefer, reader? Is God omniscient or not? Or, is God deficient in knowledge? Where your sentiment goes here requires the honest and consistent Bible student to be either an ardent Arminian or a devoted Absoluter. Brethren, do not run to error due to prejudice. Example: did not Moses, by faith, choose to suffer with the despised people of God (the true Israel,

who were no doubt, spoken of to him in a very prejudicial tone) rather than continue in the popular path?

As for this writer, it is preferable, far more delightful too, to stand resolutely alone, surrounded by a rancorous world of religion, and contend for the absolute omniscience and sovereignty of God, than to have a place among deluded millions who love and embrace a lie.

Returning now to II Samuel 12.24, 25, another unique expression is given us to behold. “And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.” Jedidiah means word meanings. David would call his son, Solomon, meaning “peaceful” but the Lord directed Nathan to call him Jedidiah, God’s darling. Whatever else may be said of Solomon, it is a truth indisputable that this unique man who served as king over Israel was retained in great affection by God.

The kingdom of Israel during the reign of Solomon expanded greatly. Peace abounded. Prosperity was beyond anything that might have been imagined. The king ruled absolutely and firmly, but with wisdom such as was never known before or after. Except for an aborted effort by Solomon’s brother, Adonijah, to acquire the throne (I Kings 1.5ff), he was never rivaled. Zadoc the priest, along with Nathan the prophet and Benaiah, a warrior, stood with Solomon during this coup and afterwards served him faithfully, even to the extermination of many old foes of David, Solomon’s father.

Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, bringing the powerful empire of Egypt into alliance with Israel. He ruled from the Red Sea to the Euphrates, thus fulfilling Jehovah’s ancient prophecy to Abraham, recorded in Genesis 15.18. Jehovah bestowed upon Solomon understanding and wisdom so extensive that travelers came from afar (from the uttermost parts of the earth, Matthew 12.42) to marvel at this wise king. The construction of the private house of Solomon and the erection of the temple, in conjunction with other magnificent buildings, took at least 20 years to complete (I Kings 9.10). It seems everything Solomon did was carried out in a lavish scale. It is worth mention as well, all of this was accomplished before Solomon was forty years of age.

SOLOMON IN LATER YEARS

It is just here that Solomon’s desires appear to take a strange turn. Seemingly, Solomon had all any man could desire. He had the blessed favor of God. He ruled an empire. Fame spread his name to the outermost regions. Untold wealth secured his every desire (I Kings 10.23). Yet for all this, Solomon was a lustful sinner! God raised him up, provided for him every instrument for the accomplishment of each purpose, but Solomon, despite all this, could not rise above his carnal passions. “But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, “divine darling” according to reliable sources of Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites (I Kings 11.1ff).” “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin (Nehemiah 13.26).”

Could anyone have dreamed this precipitous fall of so favored an individual?

At that time Solomon “...had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart (I Kings 11.3).” The question must be asked, why would any man on earth need, or want, much less acquire, 1000 fair ladies for his possession except for reasons of excessive vanity and worldly show? Especially troubling is the situation of Solomon, for wisdom was his

paramount gift. Yet it was so; Solomon succumbed to carnal passions. Did God somehow select the wrong man for the leadership of Israel?

Remember, it was Jehovah that raised up Solomon, endowing him with an array of talents, at the same time securing his kingdom from the river to the seas. What then could have happened? Why would Solomon fail his God? And fail he did! A better question to ask might be, would Solomon not fail God? Despite his lofty attainments and gifts, was Solomon more able to rise above sin than any other son of Adam? “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one (Romans 3.10).”

There can be no doubt Solomon turned from the holy commandments of God and went a whoring after strange gods. (Poor, self-infatuated man, who thinks he may stand firm in the day of trial apart from the grace of God.) Look upon Solomon; wise, rich, powerful, yet seeming helpless to follow the cunning enticements of many outlandish women. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites (I Kings 11.4, 5ff).” This chronicle of Solomon’s wickedness is solemn indeed! Can it be imagined that after building the temple for the God of Israel he then built high places for the gods of the heathens, as Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon? Not only for these leading heathen deities did Solomon erect places of worship. So did he for all his strange wives (Verse 8).

Here develops what many would consider a conflict in doctrines. There are those who feel certain Solomon’s deeds were not involved in, or restricted by, the wise purposes of God. “God did not have anything to do with Solomon’s terrible sins” we are informed. Though there are many Scriptures concerning the wise government of God, one shall be sufficient at this time for this feeble argument. “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46.9, 10).” All the vain attempts of devils or men cannot blunt the force of these plain and precious words.

Whatever end, or ends, there may be; whatever beginning, or beginnings, may prompt those ends, we may be sure God, God alone, has declared it or them. Solomon had a very good beginning. Few deny his beginning was eternally purposed. Then, why should we be fearful or reluctant to find comfort knowing the end of Solomon was equally purposed as was his beginning? Did God raise up Solomon or not? Read I Kings 3 concerning the prayer for wisdom by Solomon and see if God did not raise him up. Should it be a thing incredible that God had a purpose in this son of David and God would surely bring that purpose to pass?

That there was a judicious purpose in the failure of Solomon should not be doubted. This was by no means the only time God had dealt so with a powerful ruler. Consider: “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth (Romans 9.17, 18).” Behold the contrast. God raised up Pharaoh! By raised up we understand it to include the will of God for this ruler to be born, survive to maturity, gain authority, resist Moses and Aaron, and a multitude of other things for Jehovah to display His glory and power in overthrowing all the devices in the heart of Pharaoh, including his implacability, and rout Pharaoh’s mighty armies in the process. In short, the Potter formed the clay, then exercised His eternal will over it to accomplish His wise plan for the deliverance of Israel. If then

God assumed the control of the heart of this wicked king to show forth His power, how much more would He do so in raising up Solomon?

Whenever predestination is proclaimed by the servants of God there always seems to be those, wiser than Solomon, at least in their opinion, who decry the thought that God could be anywhere near, or remotely involved with, the universe where the sin occurred, lest He be the “author of sin.” We resist the temptation to take up that subject while saying, it is impossible to separate the wicked conduct of the lives of God’s children from the righteous conduct of God’s children. Did not David say, “My times are in thy hand”? Shall we then say he only meant the good times and not the evil? May the Lord deliver us from such foolishness! Moreover, Solomon himself said, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Ecclesiastes 3.1ff).” With such positive declarations from the Word of God, how dare any son of Adam question God had a wise purpose in all the events of the life of Solomon, including the folly of his later years? Has not God fully and positively declared, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46.10)?” There can really be no question that God raised up Solomon to enlarge and secure His great nation, Israel, then, in His wise counsel, He brought Solomon’s rule to a terminus at the appointed time, and finally, He divided his kingdom. The divided kingdom is exactly what is meant by the expression in our text, “For this thing is from me!”

To fortify the above conclusion, that is the way things took place. Did God lose control? Did Solomon fizzle out and ruin the purpose of God by frolicking with strange wives, paying homage to their strange gods? Worse yet, did God have to change courses when Solomon fell from his lofty status and debased himself and his nation? Certainly not! May we join with Paul, saying “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Romans 11.33-36).”

Surely no one approves Solomon’s conduct, nor their own sinfulness for that matter, but it must be admitted that by whatever name you desire to call the process, Solomon’s conduct fell within the scope of God’s wise plan. God, who cannot err, and who rules in the affairs of heaven and earth, is infinitely above all the speculation and vain imaginations of mortals. Some, seeking to compromise the will of God with the notions of man, say God has both a secret and a revealed will. We disagree, but we have no serious quarrel with them so long as they do not deny God’s will embraced all of Solomon’s activities, good and bad. Others suggest God overruled or suffered these things to come to pass. Even so, if that be the case, surely He willed to suffer or overrule. It is unthinkable that matters simply slid by God while He attended to better things. Many things were transpiring then (and so today) that were all components in shaping the outcome of the will of God for Israel in general and His elect in particular. As we shall see later, at the same time Solomon was coming into the arena of life, so too were those God would later raise up to be his foes. Forces were being forged into alliances. Opposition was building even while Solomon was growing in power. The very instruments Solomon used to bring power and fame to himself and Israel were the same instruments that drove a wedge in the twelve tribes; particularly the levies and the forced servitude employed in the building of the houses of Solomon, including the temple. Strange, that while God was blessing Solomon to gather the materials and bring to pass that which God had promised, his efforts were alienating his brethren.

An observant reader may well want to counter our views by saying that portion of our text we have emphasized, for this thing is from me, came as a result of Solomon's transgressions and for no other reason. That surely will not solve any problems for Arminians and will-worshippers, however.

Solomon's sins were only a part of the instruments employed in bringing to pass the division of the tribes. An example of this can be seen in Joseph and his brothers. They sinned against him (Genesis 37.18ff). It led to his exile in Egypt. His exile in Egypt then led to his ascension to the throne with Pharaoh, the king. In the time of famine (which God sent, not a quirk of nature) the brothers are delivered by Joseph.

Beings Arminians by nature, they believed their sin brought all this calamity upon their heads, not seeing the wise purposes of God as the ruling cause. But Joseph, wiser by far than they, being taught of God, says "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive (Genesis 50.20)." The brothers of Joseph thought one thing; God meant another!

This is exactly what is to be seen in the life of Solomon. What Solomon did was one thing. What God meant was another.

The tribes would be separated. Warfare and separation would continue until the end of the nation when God finally dispersed it. But the wondrous plan of God to preserve a family, and within that family a seed, until the birth of Jesus may be clearly seen from first to last. If the Lord enables, we hope to inquire further at another time.

In closing this article on predestination we include a brief comment from a dear and well-respected Old School Baptist minister from the past. He has said in a few words what most of us could only desire to be able to say:

"So, in regard to predestination, some who oppose that true and precious and solemn doctrine, will sometimes say, that if God purposed the wicked acts of men, then he himself does the wicked acts, and they will gravely profess to reply to us by saying that God does not work efficiently in the wicked to do evil, as he does in the righteous to do righteousness, as though we believed the contrary. Such arguments avoid the question, and create the issues to which they apply. And still they have to acknowledge that if God permitted a thing to be done, or even foreknew that it would be, and still created the world with that knowledge, then it was his purpose that it should take place. That truth a child can see, and the wisest man cannot evade it, and an angel cannot understand the full meaning of the glorious truth of God's absolute sovereignty in will and purpose and works. 'He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.' 'His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.'"

Elder Silas Durand, Fragments; July, 1898.

What more could be said in regard to Solomon, David, or us today? Our God is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Amen!

The Remnant

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I KINGS – THE END OF SOLOMON’S REIGN;

JEROBOAM, AND REHOBOAM, THE FIRST KINGS OF A DIVIDED ISRAEL

An appropriate beginning for this chapter in predestination is a brief quotation from our No. 20 in this series:

“Forces were being forged into alliances, Opposition was building even while Solomon was growing in power. The very instruments Solomon used to bring power and fame to himself and Israel were the same instruments that drove a wedge between the twelve tribes; particularly the levies and the forced servitude employed in the building of the houses of Solomon, including the temple.”

And so it was. Solomon grew older and wiser. He also grew an appetite for the idol gods of his many wives, 1 Kings 11.8. How could this be? Had Solomon kicked over the traces? Reader, one only has to examine within to learn the secret of personal iniquity and lust. Perhaps it is far more widespread in ourselves than most may care to admit. Even so, Solomon’s path would, without fail, lead to a permanent rupture among the twelve tribes of Israel. Lest any have a sudden outbreak of Arminian reasoning in this regard, remember the words of Jeremiah: “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jeremiah 10.23).” Since that was written nearly 400 years after Solomon, we hardly think the prophet would except the regal king in this sweeping statement. God was fully in control! The way of this man, Solomon, was not in himself either.

SOLOMON’S ADVERSARIES

Hadad

Before examining the account of Rehoboam, Solomon’s successor and son, and Jeroboam, king of the ten northern tribes, notice must be given to several whom God raised up as adversaries unto beloved Solomon. Should the reason be asked why, let us say, it establishes in greater detail the complete control God wielded over the lives of all those who were contemporaries with Solomon, especially those involved in his decline. “And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king’s seed in Edom (1 Kings 11.14).” Harken, you who despise predestination! Was our great Jehovah merely a spectator in the rise of this adversary, Hadad? Certainly not! No amount of rage or malice will obviate the truth; God not only had a will in the matter, He stirred up Hadad. Hadad was a fugitive from the sword of Joab during the reign of David, Solomon’s father. As an Edomite youth he, among others, fled to Egypt to avoid the vengeance of David’s decree which would certainly bring an end to theirs lives. In this strange episode, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave them sanctuary, a house, and appointed Hadad victuals and land. Why would this Egyptian king show favor to a youthful castaway from the families of Esau? We can only say, “Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” More amazing than all this, Pharaoh extended an even more lavish favor to Hadad the Edomite. “And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen (1 Kings 11. 19f).” What more could Hadad have desired? From appearance he was set for life. Luxury, fame, prominence and security. This was about the best this earth could offer. However, intelligence came to the ears of Hadad which aroused smoldering

passions. “And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country (1 Kings 11.21).” This is no isolated incident in the affairs of humanity. It is all too common. Here was a man with everything, yet he felt compelled to throw it all away to nurse a burning grudge. But wait! Remember; God stirred up this adversary. After all the wrangling and disputing we still come to this: God directed this affair to fulfill His eternal purpose. Those children of the Heavenly King who find solace in God’s sovereignty ascribe the incident to absolute predestination. Arminians, however, take refuge in sophistry and double talk, which is but a wall daubed with untempered mortar.

Pharaoh observed this animosity fuming forth from Hadad as extremely strange. “Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country?” Pharaoh reasoned, but not even compelling arguments from this great monarch could dissuade Hadad. “And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise (1 Kings 11.22).” Hear his response! Nothing! A voice had appealed to Hadad from the very throne of Egypt but it was powerless against the will of the Sovereign of the universe. God had stirred up an adversary, Hadad, and no enticements nor allurements could bend this resolute rod, for God raised him up for this specific purpose, to chastise Solomon. We are not informed just what activities Hadad engaged in towards Solomon beyond it being called “mischief” (1 Kings 11.25).

It is interesting to note that Hadad asks of Pharaoh to “let me go in any wise.” Pharaoh was as helpless to retain Hadad as a previous Pharaoh was to keep the Hebrew children from crossing the Red Sea to freedom. Both the Hebrews and Hadad had been stirred by the declaration of God’s will, and go they must; each for their respective purpose. The Hebrews returned to Canaan freed from bondage and Hadad returned to mischief.

Since God stirred up Hadad for this particular purpose who dares say Hadad could have acted any different than what he did? And why not? Did not the great Jehovah have a plan worthy of Himself in all this? If He did not then we poor creatures are in desperate straits indeed, for free will reigns rather than the eternal councils. Hadad would be a mischief maker as sure as God was on His throne. And the historical facts are that Hadad did exactly what God stirred him up to do. Was God’s holiness violated by Hadad fulfilling the eternal purpose? We can only pity the soul that thinks so.

Rezon

“And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah (1 Kings 11.23).” It appears that Rezon broke away from Hadadezer his king and established himself as captain over a following of men of like passions. He ultimately became king over Syria and devoted much energy pestering Solomon so long as he lived. As Hadad the Edomite troubled Judah from the South it seems Rezon did the same from the North, thus inflicting considerable grief on Solomon. What shall be said then of these troublers? This much can be said: they were both stirred by none other than God for purposes that seemed good in His sight. Can it be thought that the Scripture, “The way of the transgressor is hard,” would afford Solomon an exemption due to his station in Israel? God did indeed raise up and stir these two troublers in Israel and we are persuaded it was for wise purposes determined from eternity past.

There are many Hadads and Rezens affecting the lives of the elect family. Some seem to do so justly and some unjustly but all do so within the framework of God’s absolute predestination.

Jeroboam

Third, but certainly the more conspicuous among the inveterate foes of Solomon, was Jeroboam. Hadad and Rezon may have been particularly pesky as adversaries of Solomon but Jeroboam was raised up by God and proclaimed by the prophet Ahijah to be successor to ten of the tribes of Israel. An unending division ruptured the families descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with Jeroboam being the first of a long line of wicked kings to rule over them. Thus, Jeroboam figures prominently in the plan God ordained in eternity past for the course of the twelve tribes.

At this juncture we pause to ask a simple question of those who believe God only controls good things but not those things which are considered (by human logic) evil or sinful: according to your line of thinking, how much control did God, the creator of the heavens and earth, possess at the time of Solomon, Hadad, Rezon, Jeroboam and the host of other Israelites who had gone whoring after the gods and idols of the nations about them? To repeat, how much control did God have? If our God only rules and determines events thought sanitary by us, and has no direct involvement in the unsanitary deeds of His creation, is He not, by such blasphemous reasoning, practically in retirement from the affairs of this world? To disassociate God from all the events of time and eternity that are not pure and holy would be the equivalent of saying He has either lost control or never had it in the first place.

Some would dodge the above conclusion by saying God has a secret will and a revealed will, or that God permits sin while not ordaining its execution. That is, at best, ludicrous, and at worst, infidelity. For our part, we rejoice in this truth, from everlasting, God did determine all events of all time and they are all as sure as His throne. If it might be asked if we understand it all, we would, without hesitation, say no, and yet at the same time take great comfort in believing it to be so.

The rise and conduct of Jeroboam is an extremely interesting subject. However, only that portion of his life which relates to Solomon will be considered. Jeroboam's name seems to mean, the people contend, or he pleads the cause of the people. Whatever, he certainly was a dominant figure of the period. Jeroboam was the son of a servant of Solomon, Nebat, an Ephraimite. His mother's name was Zeruah, a widow. Some ancient manuscripts say she was a porne, or harlot.

Jeroboam's antagonism toward Solomon follows a familiar path, one frequently seen in the Scriptures. "And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph (1 Kings 11.28)." Was it a quirk of genetic formation passed on from his parents that produced this mighty valour? Or could it rather be the conferred character from God? Moreover, there were frequently conspicuous men of valour in those days. Why then single out this Jeroboam? Was it chance, luck, a simple fortuitous happening? Solomon was a wise man; a skilled man; far above even the wisest of other men. He excelled in the study of human nature. Could it have been a miscalculation by Solomon which led him to station Jeroboam in such a prominent position? No! The divine record indicates the will of God was the determinant factor in Jeroboam's rise to power and influence among the people.

There are many champions and brave leaders of various causes. Some succeed; some fail. What or who makes them to be different? In the case of Jeroboam there can be no question. God sent His prophet Ahijah with tidings from heaven. God determined the course of Jeroboam.

Jeroboam proudly clothed himself in a new garment, apparently befitting his new position. "And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of

the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee (1 Kings 11.30,31ff).” This episode leads us to ponder a fundamental position derived from Scriptures. Since God sent His prophet to Jeroboam with specific instructions, then it must have been the will of God for matters to come to pass exactly as described. Thus, His will being as eternal as Himself, the incident, together with all corresponding events, was predestinated. Yes, blessed predestination! Who shall dare assume God only wished or hoped matters would fall out as prescribed by His prophet Ahijah? Listen once again. This is the voice of eternal purpose: “For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel.” That expression will satisfy all but the most hardened Arminians. God intended matters to be as Ahijah spoke them, and so they were.

From 1 Kings 11.33 to 39, we find the catalog of reasons for assigning Jeroboam to prominence and the rending of ten tribes from Solomon and his seed. Those sins, however do not change the truth of eternal purpose. All God’s works are eternally known by Him and what He does is done forever, meaning, He had determined beforehand, even from eternity, what He would do regarding Solomon’s fall from integrity. May His name be praised that our times, like Solomon’s, are in His hands.

“Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam, And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon (1 Kings 11.40).” What dreadful conduct! Solomon, in many respects a splendid type or figure of Christ, clutched in his breast a murderous passion toward the very man whom God raised up to lift his hand against him. “Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity (Psalm 39.5).” “Solomon sought!” Note well, Solomon contemplated the murder of one of his brethren. If the ignited emotion of this corrupted king of Israel had given free expression, Jeroboam would have been a corpse within hours of the desired deed.

Solomon, with all his wisdom, might, influence, and determination yet could not sustain the destruction of Jeroboam, for, as our text from the previous article stated, “This thing is from me” was the word of Jehovah relative to the impending division of the twelve tribes. Surely the potter had molded the clay; each for its respective purpose. Solomon would fail in his nefarious plot. Jeroboam would flee to Egypt for security.

Solomon died after serving Israel forty years (1 Kings 11.42). Now, after 120 years under three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon, Israel was really, externally at least, no better served, and considerably worse, for their tenure as a monarchy. What a striking lesson for the saints of God today; “Our kingdom is not of this world,” for surely, if it is, we are in worse straits than Israel was then.

Solomon was dead. Jeroboam, anointed of God to rule the ten Northern tribes was in Egypt, and Rehoboam, Solomon’s arrogant son, reigned in his stead. “There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand (Ecclesiastes 5.13,14).” Perhaps Solomon had prophesied against himself unwittingly.

THE REIGNS OF JEROBOAM AND REHOBOAM.

“But I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes (1 Kings 11.35).” Jehovah had spoken thus by the mouth of Ahijah. This is a visible and most certain example of God having declared the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46.10). There were no contingencies, no variables. God had spoken. And so it came to pass. How beautiful to the little sheep who rejoice in sovereign grace. Amidst all the turmoil and confusion in the camps of Israel; despite the determination of Solomon to slay Jeroboam; Jeroboam fleeing to Egypt for fear; idolatry rampant; even revolt among the tribes, God was bringing to pass His eternal purposes to preserve Himself a remnant (Romans 11.5)

and maintain the royal seed line of David (Romans 1.2,3) until His only begotten Son would sit on the throne according to the everlasting covenant (Acts 2.29-3 1).

The reader will be well served here to take notice that Solomon is not accorded the prominence in the New Testament his ancestors received. Especially noteworthy is the omission of Solomon from the catalog of the faithful in Hebrews, chapter eleven. Rahab, a harlot, is listed. Samson, a suicide, is mentioned. Jephthah, who evoked an awful vow upon his daughter, is found, but not Solomon. David, Samuel, and the prophets close out the list. Surely, there is a lesson for us in these circumstances.

“And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king (1 Kings 12.1).” This is but one more vivid illustration of the folly of man. The accepted opinion in Israel was to install Rehoboam king over all Israel, but God had before determined, and moreover, vocalized through Ahijah the prophet, that ten tribes would follow Jeroboam, not Rehoboam. “For this thing is from me” once again comes to mind, focusing our attention on the determinate counsel of God. What would come of the message from Jehovah to Jeroboam if the people had succeeded in bringing Rehoboam to the throne? To the blessed eye of the living children it is clear as the sea of glass, all events must be absolutely controlled by God, or chaos must ensue. Had all Israel gained their objective to bring Solomon’s son permanently to the throne, the message of God through Ahijah would be little more than a suggestion.

Jeroboam was recalled from Egypt to address Rehoboam, much as his name indicated, “the people contend.” Their petition to the new king was simple. It made common sense. Young kings are, however, often void of common sense and Rehoboam was no exception. “Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee (1 Kings 12.4).” On the response of young king Rehoboam hangs the heart of our whole thesis in this series of articles. If, as Arminians contend, man is free to act as he will, the new king might just as well respond affirmatively as negatively and nothing outside of himself could violate his volition.

We know what Jehovah had exclaimed. “This thing is from me!” God had already determined that Jeroboam would rule over ten tribes, thus we are compelled to believe that, despite all the hoopla for free will, nothing would take place to force matters to come to pass contrary to God’s determination, also called absolute predestination.

Let work mongers the world over engage to uncover a scrap of evidence to fortify their absurd notion of free will, especially as it may relate to this episode. Rehoboam was not going to respond favorably to Israel’s pleas. As his father Solomon had written earlier, “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord (Proverbs 16.33).” God had declared His purpose for Israel. The outcome was as sure as the rising of the sun. “For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back (Isaiah 14.27)?”

Rehoboam could sooner tear God from the throne than he could conjure up sentiments favorable to the pleas of Jeroboam and Israel that he loosen the oppressive yoke his father Solomon had put upon them.

CONFLICTING COUNSEL

From the beginning we have attempted to show that God would, for reasons worthy of Himself, divide the twelve tribes, leaving the Northern tribes to apostasy and preserving the seed through which the Christ would be born from the tribe of Judah. Following is the record of how the division took place:

Jeroboam had been determined by Jehovah to lead off the ten tribes of the North (1 Kings 11.29-32). Upon the death of Solomon, Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead (1 Kings 11.43). At the first, all Israel came to Shechem to make Rehoboam king (1 Kings 12.1). At the same time they summoned Jeroboam from Egypt to petition Rehoboam, appealing to the young king for a reversal from the rigors Solomon had enacted. Their appeal was straightforward. “Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee (1 Kings 12.4).” Rehoboam’s response to Israel’s petition exhibits from the commencement he had substantial character flaws. “And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed (1 Kings 12.5).” The time (Ecclesiastes 3.8) for confrontation was at hand. Rehoboam first sought out the counsel of the old men that stood with Solomon his father. Accordingly, they recommended he speak good to Israel, assuring they would be his servants for ever (1 Kings 12.6,7). “But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him (1 Kings 12.8ff).”

“Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning (Ecclesiastes 10.16)!” Surely a weighty woe was about to fall upon Israel. The young men who grew up with Rehoboam afforded him no good counsel yet their words were adopted by the young king. “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge (Proverbs 19.27).”

Rehoboam had heard counsel representing opposite points of view. On the one hand, the old men who stood with Solomon encouraged Rehoboam to deal kindly with the legitimate appeals of the Israelites. Opposing views were urged by his fellows, no doubt as unstable as himself. Could the matter then fall out one way as well as the other? Wisdom and wise counsel emanated from the peace party; folly and brazenness best describes the counsel of the contemporaries of Rehoboam. How would the issue evolve? “There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord (Proverbs 21.30).” God alone would decide the outcome! So has it ever been and ever shall be.

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will (Proverbs 21.1).” This newly established king was certainly no exception to the text. Even though the request of Israel was noble; even though the counsel of the young men was wicked; all things were to be determined by the will of God alone. Those determinations were forged in eternity and we are today blessed to know them as the absolute predestination of all things. How happy those who find comfort and consolation therein!

Israel was soon to be divided forever. Ten tribes to the north; two tribes to the south. The trigger which would touch off the rupture was a seemingly simple decision to be made by the new king, Rehoboam. A simple decision, but would he follow the counsel of the older and wiser advisers? Or, would he rather stoop to his carnal instincts, primed to the full with egotism and pride, and acquiesce to the urgings of his rowdy associates, obviously vile as himself? A question, perhaps of far more importance is, was this his decision to make? To the law and the testimony: “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord (Proverbs 16.1).” Those blessed to trust God and His word believe just what the text informs us. God prepared Rehoboam’s heart for this occasion and gave his tongue the answer to Israel’s petition. Both were from the Lord! May we be humbly submissive to this comforting truth. So the die was cast. “And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions (1 Kings 12.11).” Reader, be not hasty in assessing the matter. Yes, Rehoboam acted in a most cruel and

pompous manner. His conduct fully impeaches his credentials as a fit king. Nevertheless, we see behind the impulsive behavior of Rehoboam the authority of a higher king; a King Whose authority is never repulsed. “Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat (1 Kings 12.15).” “For the cause was from the Lord!” Yes, our God, Who ruleth in heaven and earth, is the first cause of all causes. And, to repeat once again from our previous text, “For this thing is from me.”

SUMMARY

As was the case many times in centuries past, God rejected some on one hand and preserved some on the other hand. The scope of attention from the division of Israel forward would be on Judah, from which would come the Messiah. Once again, the pivotal point determining the course of events evolved from actions practically everyone would consider contrary to good conduct. Rehoboam followed the path of carnal reasoning and thus the unity of Israel was destroyed. We believe, however, that the evidence is unmistakable; God had purposed matters to come to pass as they did. So, what shall we say? “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out (Romans 11.33)!” God had judged according to His wisdom and knowledge. He issued His eternal directives. Israel was divided. Can we fully understand? “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor (Romans 11.34)?”

Though we give leave to the subject for now, sobered by the thought that both Jeroboam and Rehoboam were instruments in the hand of God to bring to pass His eternal purposes, we call to mind finally, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Romans 11.36).”

The Remnant

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II KINGS – NAAMAN THE LEPER

Now Naaman, Captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper (II Kings 5.1.)

This has been a captivating chronicle for the family of God for centuries. Few can read it without realizing with God all things are possible. With the exception of one quotation in Luke, Naaman is mentioned only in II Kings 5. If the narrative were viewed only as the history of a miracle preformed by Elisha it would still be interesting reading, but the reader will miss much without knowing something of the spiritual content.

The aim of this article, and one to follow, should the Lord enable, is to go beyond bare history to view the story as a positive and blessed landmark in the path of the just to truth in Jesus. “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4.18).” May our path shine brilliantly as we approach our perfect day.

Each individual introduced in this remarkable account fit their position precisely as the Lord had predestinated they fill it. We believe that after a careful reading, the spiritual child of God cannot fail to see, not only the beauty and marvel this episode portrays, but the necessity of every element unfolding with exacting precision. If that sounds somewhat akin to predestination, then our humble goal has been at least partially accomplished.

THE INVOLVED

Naaman

“Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria....” Naaman was a man of considerable prominence. He occupied a position few dream of obtaining. However, God had singled him out to endure a horrible disease. He also prepared for him a marvelous cure.

Even casually reviewing the Word of God one sees persons appointed beneficiaries of a miracle or special dispensation from Jehovah coming from every rank of society. The rich, the poor, the wise, the foolish, young and old, the infirm from all walks of life; each was specially called by God. Especially true is the case of Naaman. He was the leading general in the Syrian army, a position not easily obtained. The lives of multitudes hung on a simple whim from this exalted captain. Whatever favors and rewards were afforded a man in his position, they were his for the asking. His was a station of luxury, preferment, reverence, splendor, fame, and just about anything else a man of his rank might desire. Not knowing his leprous affliction, it would be easy to admire, even covet, his station in life. May our Lord teach us to be contented with whatever our lot in life may be.

“[Naaman] was a great man with his master.” How unusual! Rarely did kings allow themselves to have emotional ties with those under their authority. There was always the risk (in their minds) of mutiny, plots or subterfuge of some sort, capable of wresting the king from his throne. Of most potentates it could be said their position was tenuous at best. Nevertheless, the working arrangement between the Syrian king and Naaman was such that even an unhumbled Arminian might pause to see if the hand of

God was in the matter. (They may even admit that perhaps God even planned it that way.) A thought to keep in mind is the king's eagerness to send Naaman to Samaria for a cure based solely on the brief utterance of a captive little maid. Under different circumstances this might well have been impossible. With God all things are possible.

Naaman, the captain of the Syrian host was, as well, described as "honourable." The word honourable here should not be understood as a particular inherent quality inclining him to noble deeds or practices worthy of praise. Rather it seems to mean his honour was chiefly a result of "...because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria." History compels the reader to acknowledge the Syrians gave honor to Naaman rather than the Lord, by whom deliverance had come to them. These people cared nothing for the God of Israel. Naaman was an instrument in the hand of God to bring deliverance to Syria.

This deliverance was not for any change of mind by God towards these heathens. Rather, it was to elevate Naaman in their eyes and his master, the king of Syria. Consider: leprosy abounded in that day. Had Naaman been a mere soldier of lower rank or station the wheels of progress would not have budged in his favor. (What a joy for the saints of God to see here His handiwork in each event.) Naaman gains favor with the king. But it was of the Lord for Naaman to bring deliverance to Syria. Naaman at some point became a leper. What should have been a source of much anguish, shame and sorrow is actually the means to bring Naaman to know the God of Israel. All these things were working together for good.

"But he was a leper." This leprosy, the dreaded plague, cast a shroud of darkness and grief over the life of Naaman and his family. But, praise God, it was this very affliction that would impel him to seek out the prophet of the Lord in Samaria. May we then be not hasty in concluding the sorrows of life serve no good purpose. How sweet to join with the poet and say:

Resistless Sov'reign of the skies,
Immensely great! Immensely wise!
My times are all within thy hand,
And all events at thy command.

His great decree, who form'd the earth,
Hath fixed my first and second birth:
My parents, native place, and time,
Were all assign'd to me by him.

A Little Maid

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife (II Kings 5.2)." It was common for companies from warring armies to send out bands to plunder, lay waste, create panic and also take a few captives to serve their foreign masters. Such was the lot of this little maid, taken from among Israel's families. Pitiless and cruel, these raiders cared nothing for the grief and anguish this would bring the parents and others who perhaps knew and loved this little maid. Swift as a striking bolt of lightning she was wrested from her family. Her happy home slipped away into the distance as she was carried off like a cheap trinket derived from the spoils of victory.

The wretchedness resulting from this cruel act cannot be stressed enough. It could be nothing less than an episode filled with terror for the little girl. No doubt it was a time of extreme helplessness for her parents. What could they do in the face of certain death should they resist or plea to the annoyance of the maid's captors? A parent's worst nightmare had just doomed the family circle. A worse happening cannot be imagined; it can only be dreaded. The sweet smile of a beloved daughter was now but a bittersweet memory. And for what? We shall, the Lord willing, see.

“His providence unfolds the book,
And makes his counsels shine;
Each opening leaf, and ev'ry stroke
Fulfills some deep design.”

“A little maid.” What could she do? Powerless to resist, unable to escape, she could only submit to her merciless captors. For a little maid accustomed to a loving home this had to be an extremely confusing time. That she was not ravaged and ruined by her ruthless abductors was nothing less than a miracle. Tramping farther from home with each step, having nothing with which to plead, and as pleading could only anger her captors, she was simply merchandise in the market of an evil world. It is just here that we begin to see the unfolding providence of our God. Remember Joseph, years before, in similar straits? What an astonishing chain of events transpired, all resulting from the cruel banishment from his family and then his subsequent captivity. Even so, this unnamed little maid fulfills her role among the events comprising the unsearchable riches of God's eternal purposes in all things and for every son and daughter of Adam. Those who may read this episode and who do not believe God had a plan worthy of Himself in the captivity of the little maid, by eliminating other options must believe she was dispatched out into a merciless world, through no fault of her own, and left to flounder on her own. (In the meanwhile God looked on, from time to time, to see what might take place next.) Is it any wonder Predestinarians consider Arminians and assorted other Conditionalists little more than blasphemers? May the blessed Name of the Lord be praised, this little maid, despite her dark trials, had been appointed spokesman for the only hope Naaman the leper would have. We may safely, and with joy, identify her among the many other women throughout the Scriptures whom God was pleased to raise up to extol His glory and power under extreme circumstances.

“And she waited on Naaman's wife.” Dare the infidel Conditionalist lay this to chance? Had the whimsical breezes of the fates wafted her safely into the home of Naaman? Perhaps, according to the notion of the blinded world, she had beaten the odds? No, the sure purposes of God led this little maid to the home of Naaman where she was at the side of his wife, secured from the rabble which usually make up the numbers of an army. Should any of us then fear the strange vicissitudes of life while we are blessed to trust in the God of this little maid? This little maid had come to the place where, sent of God, she would reveal to the wife of Naaman a simple truth. That truth was, there was a prophet of God in Samaria with heavenly power and authority to work a miracle heretofore unknown to these heathen people.

“Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy.” Considering the appalling circumstances in which this little maid found herself she remarkably evidenced tender feelings towards her captors. She manifested no bitterness. Displaying emotional kindness of an extraordinary nature, the little maid laments her master's dreaded condition. Moreover, she believes he would be cured if only he were in Samaria where the prophet of the Lord resided. Her astonishing statement certainly had the characteristics of prayer: “Would God my lord

were with the prophet that is in Samaria.” Without a trace of either shame or resentment she conducted herself in a manner worthy of all those that profess a hope in Christ. Surely those things that are hid from the wise and prudent have been revealed to babes. The reason? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight (Matthew 11.26).”

How did this little maid know the old prophet in Samaria would, or even could, cure Naaman of his leprosy? She certainly had never seen him rid a leper of his leprosy. Neither had anyone else that might have been able to tell her if it was so. She was not speaking from first hand knowledge, or even hearsay. She could only be speaking from the voice of faith; God would empower the prophet to do what had never been done before. Remember the only other place besides II Kings 5 where Naaman is mentioned in the Bible? “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus [Elisha] the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4.27).” Notice this! None of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. Leprosy abounded, but cures were conspicuously absent. Surely God had reserved this great healing to serve His own glory, both then and at the time of Christ when the Lord recounted the incident. Yet for all this the little maid could say the prophet in Samaria would recover Naaman of his leprosy. The eye of faith saw what had never yet been seen.

An unnamed witness

Next came a miracle equally as great as the forthcoming healing of Naaman. The little maid was not put to shame! Nor was she rebuked for commenting on so touchy a subject. No ridicule was heaped upon her for this “fanatical concoction.” Her brief but daring comment might have brought severe beatings and even death under other circumstances. Imagine this little maid, boldly affirming to her captors about unheard of powers in Samaria. Yet for all this, she was believed, and that without a scrap of evidence or proof. Clearly, the Lord impressed upon their minds the force of the little maid’s assertion.

Concern for Naaman then led some unnamed person to take the fascinating testimony of the little maid directly to the king of Syria. “And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.” This has to be one of the more striking incidents in the Bible. Who this “one” was we are not told. Why he or she went in to the king with so extraordinary a message defies logic. Who listens to the babblings of little maids, especially those taken captive from the land of enemies? Even if this unnamed person personally believed what the little maid said, would they risk their own hide to go before the heathen king and promote so wild a tale? And that without a shred of proof.

Did this little maid possess some strange power to clothe her testimony with authenticity? No, but her God did! It appears just here we are at the crossroads of opinions. The first is, defying all odds, doing what had never been done before, the little maid got her story of a leprosy healer in Samaria, a baffling tale if one was ever told, to be believed by a succession of individuals, all the way up to the throne. The little maid’s tale reached the ears of the king. (Bookmakers and gamblers would never give favorable odds on such a daring fabrication.)

The other opinion is, God willed for this to take place – all of it – just like it transpired. Now, if it be admitted that God willed the end of the matter, that the king would believe the little maid’s story, then would not God have had to will all the other components of the incident for the last one to take place as it did? Moreover, if God willed for the king of Syria to believe the story of the little maid then the leprosy of Naaman would have to be as certain as his future recovery. Brethren, may we draw the line.

It is all or nothing; Absolute Predestination or absolute chance. If even one aspect of this drama developed by chance, free will, luck, or fate then the possibility of predestination failing would exist. Imagine that God would predestinate Naaman to be recovered of his leprosy but not predestinate the king to believe the little maid's tale. Or, even more likely, the little maid was afraid to tell what had been revealed to her. What then of Naaman's recovery? Let the Conditionalists worry over that one. Our God commands and it stands fast.

The King of Syria

“And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment (II Kings 5.5).” Potentates have a strange way of looking at matters. Common sense would dictate the king's calling in the little maid and getting whatever intelligence she may possess on the matter since, after all, she initiated the notion of a healing. No; he thinks in the strategic terms of governments dealing with governments, not knowing the government of the God of Heaven would direct the matter consistent with His eternal purposes. Off to the king of Israel he sends Naaman, flush with talents of silver, pieces of gold, and luxuriant raiment. The Syria king was eager to pay well for this proposed cure for Naaman, his captain of the host. How blind has human nature ever been! The gifts of God can neither be bought nor sold; yet men ever try.

The king of Syria had become occupied in a major way to deliver Naaman to Elisha for the recovering of his leprosy, just as the little Israelite maid had told. But the king remained as ignorant of the grand plan of God unfolding before him as if he had been a courtyard dog. Again, “These things are hid from the wise and the prudent and revealed unto babes.”

Naaman before the king of Israel

“And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy (II Kings 5.6).” Despite the many evidences we constantly see, it still staggers the mind to observe the full-blown ignorance of those in authority. With nothing more than a parchment and a few earthly trinkets, the king of Syria dispatches his captain to an appointment with the king of Israel, an inveterate foe, soliciting him to recover Naaman of his leprosy. This series of activities was about as poorly thought out as can be imagined. But wait! Do we see these events with the naked eye or are we blessed to see, by faith, this was all ordered of the Lord? Neither of these vile kings will be turned from their self-conceit to worship the God who rules over the hearts of all men. “The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” Dear Lord, open our eyes to see thy handiwork. Surely we will remain blind otherwise.

Naaman took his journey. Little did he know he would never be the same; that he would be humbled, embarrassed, angered, rebuked, but finally delivered of his cursed disease. Moreover, he would be brought to know the source of his blessing, the greatest of all possible blessings.

The king of Israel

“And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me (II Kings 5.7).” This king was Jehoram, the last of the line of Ahab and Jezebel. The relations between Jehoram and the Syrians

were bad. They were bad when his father reigned and they would be worse in days to come. Rather than regarding the letter Naaman brought as an honest overture, albeit an ill informed one, he was filled with rage and imputed vile motives to the king of Syria. So, again, a man of high standing among the people is brought into direct contact with the unfolding events emanating from the throne of God but absolutely blinded to the will and purpose bringing them all to pass. It is a sure truth; the lowliest babe in the kingdom of God is far wiser than all the kings of the earth who trust in their own understanding.

“Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” What this king utters in his rage is fully indicative of the mentality of unhumiliated mankind. However, there is a kernel of truth in his bushel of error. With God alone rests the power to kill and make alive. God may use many instruments; nevertheless, He alone exerts the power to bring these matters to pass. The king of Israel sees (with a natural sight) the power of cleansing a leper to reside with God as well.

Witness the brief desire stated by the little maid to her mistress, Naaman’s wife. It appeared casual enough, yet events were set in motion by her brief statement affecting kings and nations. We suppose the unhumiliated Arminian would attribute all this to the simple out-workings of free will. We may pity the poor soul in a great floral garden with no sight. Far worse it would be to have the mind of an Arminian, blinded to the beauties of God’s handiwork. For all this, from the words of the little maid to the actual deliverance of Naaman, only a certain few would be blessed to see the wonderful hand of God directing every fleeting thought and every bold action to bring to pass His purpose. The purpose was to recover Naaman of his leprosy, and further, lead him into the way of truth. May we lift up our voices in adoration if the Spirit of God has revealed to us the glorious meaning behind all this series of proceedings. As a dear departed Predestinarian Elder used to say while preaching, “It looks like this is going to lead us right into predestination.” Amen!

Elisha

“And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel (II Kings 5.8).” Strange indeed! We have seen the simple testimony from the little maid believed at each juncture with the exception of the wicked king of Israel. Despite all Jehovah was doing around him, the king had no more ability to take comfort in it than an ox would. How humbling to realize, neither could we see the smallest part of the wonderful plan of God unless given spiritual sight. But now enters Elisha. Diplomacy would suggest silence until the king settled down somewhat, but Elisha was no diplomat. He had been through the fires. He feared not the fuming of the king at this time. Remember the description in the text above, Elisha the man of God! Elisha marched under divine orders. How can he fail with such authority?

“Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes?” It seems this is a not so subtle rebuke of Israel’s carnal king. Elisha knows God has a plan. He, also knows the king does not know. All the king could see was a stinging insult. He thinks the king of Syria has injured his pride. Elisha could see the glory of God unfolding in a manner heretofore unknown. Elisha had raised the dead but he had never recovered a man of his leprosy. Not even once. Consider then: the king of Israel did not believe anything near a recovery was possible. Thus, it follows; he did not believe the recovering of a leper was ordered of God. On the other hand, Elisha was prompt to summons the leper and at the same time rebuke the king. Though he had never accomplished such a miracle it was clear to him that as God’s prophet he was about to fulfill God’s will for the leper. Elisha then believed God would accomplish His will (he was a predestinarian) and the king did not so much as think about God in the matter (He was an Arminian).

“Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” So speaks Elisha. Bold, fearless, confident, the great prophet challenges Naaman to venture forth. What Elisha meant by “he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel” was that the question of recovering Naaman’s leprosy would certainly be resolved to the glory of God. The time would come that Naaman would testify there was no God but in Israel.

We conclude this chapter in Naaman’s recovery with the hope of returning to it in another issue. It has been shown thus far that these human events, from the least of them to the greatest, were all details to bring the end to pass. If the reader can offer any explanation how came all these events to fit together, from first to last, apart from the predestination of God, we offer them space to prove it. For those content to take comfort in the power and purpose of God, rejoice; the best is yet to come.

The Remnant

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Number 23

II KINGS – NAAMAN THE LEPER

(Part two)

Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper (2 Kings 5.1).

FROM this verse and the seven verses following, the path of each person involved, directly or indirectly, displays the relationship each occupied in the final recovery of Naaman the Leper. These persons were: Naaman; his wife; a little maid taken captive from Samaria; an unnamed mediator; the king of Syria; the king of Samaria (Israel), and, finally, Elisha and his servant.

Since the prominent theme of these articles is the absolute predestination of all things, we have frequently attempted to demonstrate that (and how) each individual fit their appointed place. The absurdity of suggesting all these persons and events blended together by chance is clearly manifest. So perfectly does each link in the chain meld itself with the other it would seem that only the blind could not see the divine pattern.

Readers shall decide for themselves if predestination or chance accomplished the recovery of Naaman. Their decision, however, shall not change the eternal purposes of God.

The story continues

“So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha (Verse 9).” The long, weary journey from Syria was over but the boldest steps were yet to come. It must be remembered, Naaman had just been at the court of the king of Israel. There he witnessed the hissy fit Jehoram pitched because Ben-hadad, king of Syria, had sent Naaman to him. To Jehoram it was nothing less than a bizarre challenge for Ben-hadad to send Naaman there for a recovery of his leprosy. Based on what everyone knew about leprosy it would seem that Jehoram acted much like most anyone else would, excepting that a king should exemplify more rational conduct. Surely, all flesh is grass.

Naaman was a man who had experienced much. He was an impressive leader and a figure of considerable importance. Yet, for all this, he was stricken! Leprosy, like an insidious intruder, had marred his flesh and thus his life. After his hopeful journey he is confronted by the rude outburst of the king of Samaria, probably altering his disposition somewhat. He had, no doubt, bathed his sword in the blood of lesser men for such abuse. That with which he was confronted in the court of Jehoram might well have tempted his to a similar response. Yet he remained calm, at least outwardly. The Scriptures record nothing of his demeanor while in the presence of Jehoram. Naaman had not come this distance to simply inflict a deadly wound on this ranting king, much as he may have felt it was deserved. Naaman did not turn away just yet. It seems he awaited other developments, and they were not long coming.

“And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall

know that there is a prophet in Israel (verse 8).” We dare not speculate on matters, but from other incidents of similar circumstances the kings, evil and untrusting, usually kept a close eye on the prophets and the prophets always knew what transpired in the king’s court.

“Let him come now to me.” Human endeavor had run its course; now it was time for a display of God’s will and power.

Naaman, like one caught in the middle, had bided his time while kings exposed themselves for the fools they were. Was it curiosity that kept Naaman there? Was it a fleeting hope? Whatever it was, Naaman must stand before the prophet in Israel. The plan of God had not unraveled. All was going along apace at the direction of divine purpose.

Remember, this incident carried such significance that our Lord made direct reference to it (Luke 4.27), even reciting the name of Naaman the Syrian.

“So Naaman came.” The words are simple, yet profound. All the events and seemingly trivial turns that brought the great soldier directly to the door of the prophet of God were all ordained of the Lord. Naaman’s journey appears to have climaxed and from nature’s viewpoint so it did. It was, however, just the beginning of an entirely new journey. Now in the company of Elisha, the servant of Jehovah, Naaman was a babe in the womb of divine providence. Travail and sorrow would soon ensue, emanating in the spiritual awakening of the leper of Syria.

“So Naaman came.” No sooner had he come than he heard the words, not of Elisha, but of a lowly servant, saying, “go.”

That which followed could not have been the way Naaman had planned the affair to develop, as we shall presently see.

Just here it seems good to examine the validity of our theme, absolute predestination as it regards our subject. There can be no doubt with the true believer, only the hand of God was sufficient to have brought events to issue so far as they had come. Those who differ would do all a great favor by revealing what portion of events God could have left alone to come into being by chance.

For many centuries the saints of the Living God have derived comfort and strength when seeing the unfolding events of time as so many landmarks through the eternally predestinated plan of God to bring to pass His will. It matters not if a small breeze of wind bends a blade of grass or the mighty upheaval of an erupting volcano rains death and destruction all about. God reigns! God reigns over all, and that with an exacting plan called predestination. From the first to the last event recorded in the Bible, remove predestination and there is nothing left but blind fate and the vagaries of chance. Remove one spoke from the wheels of time and the axle of progress grinds to a halt. God would be thus frustrated. Perish the thought!

Naaman surveyed a situation far different than he had supposed would occur. He had endured the rage of the king of Samaria. Next, he and his entourage arrived at the home of a surly (from all appearances) old prophet who would not even show him the simple courtesy of trudging to the door. Rather than a “Welcome, stranger,” Elisha’s messenger was sent out to the awaiting caravan. The lowly servant summarily dismissed them with, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” What is this? Had Naaman come this great distance to hear such nonsense? Blessed be the Name of the Lord; things were not as they seemed. This was but another step

in the journey to light and truth in the Lord's great plan. But for the moment Naaman is blind to its glory and wonder.

The unhumbled Arminian and assorted other free willers would seize upon this situation as an undisputed crossroad for Naaman in the whole scheme of things divine. "Naaman had a choice to make," say they. "Naaman might just as well go one way as the other." "God won't force the leper to wash contrary to his will." "Naaman is no robot. He is no puppet on a string."

Can you not see the workmongers appealing to Naaman? "God did all he could and now it is UP TO YOU!" "Hell awaits the tarriers." On and on they would bleat like goats bloated on garbage. Dear reader, despite any perceived outbursts of Arminians this story would continue to progress exactly as it was determined from eternity. The whole disposing was of the Lord.

"Go and wash." No doubt the word go was a severe wound to Naaman's ego. Go and wash could only inflame the wound. That this was nothing like what Naaman expected to hear. Now came the salt for the wound. "Go and wash in Jordan." National pride was vexed as well. Go? Wash? Jordan? How can these things be? Could it be that the Lord had put more on this sinner than he could bear? Pride humbled is not easily recovered and Naaman seemed to be bombarded with stroke upon severe stroke, sufficient to crush his tried spirit.

The deepest wound was yet to come. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times." Naaman was totally ignorant of the importance of numerics to the Hebrews. Seven times did not signify that Naaman was seven times filthier than the ordinary leper. Seven meant completeness or perfection and seven dips in Jordan were no more vital to cleanse Naaman than one, except for one thing: This was the word from the Lord. Our Lord left out nothing when He directed Elisha to inform the Syrian general the manner of his cure. God told him what to do. He told him where to do it. He told him how to do it. He told him how many times to do it. Finally, He told him what he could expect from his obedience to the word of the Lord; "and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." None but fools, whose minds were inflamed with hatred for God's sovereignty, could ignore the evident; the Lord God almighty was ruling.

The First Departure

"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper (2 Kings 5.11)." If ever there was an example in the Bible of a sinner in the state of rebellion, Naaman is it. Naaman was wroth! To the Syrian general the whole trip had gone sour and was a waste of time. His pride was wounded. Sufficient respect had not been shown him. No doubt the leper's wounded spirit could uncoil at any moment, and he could vent his rage on almost anyone. But God yet superintended with each turn of events as He had at the beginning. The lion leper of Syria would soon lie down with the lambs, but in God's good time.

"And [Naaman] went away." O how resentful is the unhumbled sinner. Left to himself, even for a moment, he will flee the presence of truth and "run as far as sheep can run." Before his departure is aborted Naaman speaks, probably from anger and frustration, "Behold, I thought!" It is clear from what we have seen that Naaman had thought out how things would go. He had a plan all laid out in his brilliant mind and then, to his dismay, it is nothing more than a whiff of smoke disappearing before his eyes. Naaman, a living being of God's creation, was motivated by a plan. "I thought!" Arminians are fully deceived that man governs himself by a personal plan, to be executed to the full extent of his

capability, at a whim. As for God, Arminians consider any plan He might have would be a violation of man's free will. Let them wallow in their ignorance. The Old Order of Baptists have been spiritually taught God has a plan, worthy of Himself, and He also has the capacity to execute His plan without any interference or assistance. Naaman, at that moment, was controlled by his "Behold, I thought!" Naaman reacted much like a creature whose plans have been shattered by others, without his agreement or consent. How true the text, "Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity (Psalm 39.5)."

Naaman's assumption that the old prophet would come out to him was in keeping with his perceived importance of his (Naaman's) station in life. Surely, generals commanded more respect than soothsayers. Naaman even ventured the thought that the old prophet would call on the name of his God, whomever he may be. Observe, Naaman says his God, meaning not Naaman's god, but the prophet's. If Naaman even placed any value on gods in general at that time is open to question.

A difficulty of considerable proportions arises here. "Was Naaman spiritually quickened at that time and being brought through the process of God's plan to the truth?" Or, "Was Naaman yet dead in trespass and sin awaiting the spiritual work of God to bring him to light from darkness?" This writer can only say "I do not know!" Furthermore, it is our opinion that far too much effort has been expended by the curious on matters such as these. It really does not make any difference if he was alive or yet dead in sin. We know from the end of the story that he was probably an elect vessel so all concludes well no matter your view here.

"Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper (2 Kings 5.11)." Contained in this text is an important item for consideration for it reveals a deep spiritual truth. Verse one of this chapter began by describing Naaman and concluding with, "but he was a leper." In those days lepers were generally outcasts and the contagion was normally extensively spread so it could be seen from a distance and thus the leper was avoided. It is our view that Naaman had but recently contracted the horrible disease and the manifestations of it were at that time restricted to a place where the prophet could strike his hand over it. Otherwise, had the leprosy invaded a considerable portion of the general's body he would have begun to be held in contempt and possibly even be removed from his lofty station.

Nevertheless, a minor or an extensive manifestation of the plague was sufficient for it to be said, "But he was a leper." Just so, as we compare leprosy to the plague of sin, it matters not the extent of the manifestation; one spot of sin within or upon our being renders us sinners. "Strike his hand over the place" sounds minor in degree, yet that one place identified him with the host of outcasts called lepers. It would be difficult to imagine the horror Naaman, and even his family and friends, must have experienced when the disease was made known. It must be kept in mind also, there was nothing that would shock and panic Naaman's associates, or others for that matter, more so than leprosy. He and his circle of associates were living a mental hell at the time.

"Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper (2 Kings 5.11)." Naaman had not trooped all the way to Samaria to be insulted, ignored and shuffled off by an unceremonious instruction from the servant of this prophet Elisha, whom all had come to believe could work miracles.

The reader might at this time wonder what all this has to do with absolute predestination, the theme of our series. Well, if you believe in predestination it has everything to do with it. If you do not believe in predestination it still has everything to do with it. What we believe or cannot believe has never altered

the eternal will of our God of heaven and earth. If the reader can identify one single incident up to this point that evolved through chance we shall hastily extend our regrets and give up the struggle. If there is any chance occurrences at all in this fascinating series of incidents we would at once be compelled to think Elisha crawled out on a skinny limb when he sent instruction to Naaman to go and wash seven times in Jordan and he would be clean. Elisha was God's prophet! If he understood or not; if he believed what he gave instruction for or not; none of this matters. This was the word from the Lord. God had spoken through His prophet. Thus, the matter was sure. Sure as the foundations of eternity and as certain to come to pass as the rising of the sun each morning.

The Second Departure

“Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage (2 Kings 5.12).” Several things are revealed here of the mind of Naaman. First, he did not disbelieve the old prophet he simply minimized his specific instructions. Pride, on this occasion national pride, enflamed the thinking of Naaman. Samaria was a conquered enemy of Syria. They were considered little better than rabble to the Captain of the Syrian host. Elisha's word from the Lord was fully unreasonable to the Captain. “So he turned and went away in a rage.” Naaman, a man of war, was in a rage. What his plans were beyond leaving the humble surrounding of the prophet is not recorded. Appearance would suggest that he was on his way back northeast to take a dip in one of the rivers of Damascus. Mark well; Naaman never discounts the genuineness of Elisha's pronouncements. He simply discounted the methods to be employed. It appears this valiant captain of the Syrian army could handle the business of war but was completely frustrated by a recluse prophet of Samaria.

“So he turned.” Naaman probably figured this was the end of a sorry chase for a phantom cure not to be. At least it was not to be at or in Jordan as far as he was concerned. “So he turned,” heading home. Natural circumstances and geography were to direct the path of the Captain. Be certain, however, that Jehovah had control over the events of the moment. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Leaving Elisha to proceed homeward would bring Naaman and his troop directly across Jordan somewhere south of Galilee, depending upon where in Samaria Elisha was residing at the time.

Naaman's servants

At this point we see another unlikely event take place. Being near Jordan, Naaman is approached by several members of his band. “And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean.”

This was a daring and perilous move. Naaman had already manifested his predilection to rage. Servants are exceedingly wary to make suggestions to their captains, especially when their captains are giving vent to fuming emotions within. Moreover, Naaman was exceedingly disappointed, doubtless weary, and feeling somewhat foolish. He may well too have been embarrassed. Life and death may have hung in the balance just at that moment. Pause, reader, and ask: If God had developed all these previous details to get Naaman to this juncture, would He somehow lose grip on the entire state of affairs? Or rather, as we believe, was not the God of Absolute Predestination still at the helm? These servants, seeking the welfare of their leader, were in no more danger than David was when approaching Goliath. It is surely a blessing beyond measure to be persuaded “all our times are in His hands; and all events at His command.”

Being near Jordan, the servants felt this was the time to speak. Who but a hardened agnostic would deny God directed these servants to speak at this time? “My father” was their salutation. Their reasoning was sound. If Elisha had bid Naaman to execute some mighty deed he would have done so at once. “Why not then, since you are at the river’s bank, at least heed Elisha’s words to ‘Wash and be clean?’” It much appears they are saying he really had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Where did these servants get this wisdom and courage? We suggest they received it from the same source as all the others had in this saga. Small as their part might have been in the unfolding events, they were as important as every other event. God was executing his plan. For those arrogant free-will worshippers that deny God has a plan we suggest they not waste any more time reading this article, for, the Lord willing, we shall extol absolute predestination at every opportunity.

“Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean (2 Kings 5.14).” The first word, then, indicates Naaman accepted the counsel of his wise servants. “Then went he down” surely portrays the submissive posture of a poor sinner following the Lord’s bidding. We leave that thought as a suggestion only. In going down he dipped himself seven times. It can only be imagined what must have been going through the mind of Naaman each time he dipped himself. Down he went. Up he came. No change. If dipping in Jordan might cleanse a leper then, with all his good intentions and obedience why was he not cleansed after the first dip. And the second? On and on!

Now Naaman comes to dip number six and still no change. What must have he thought? Probably that he was a ridiculous fool for starting this whole thing; Bless the name of the Lord, there was yet hope. The command from the prophet was to dip seven times. One time would avail nothing, nor would five or six. God had spoken. Seven times! So, down he goes the seventh time.

“And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” When he rose from his seventh dipping he was clean. There, for all to see, Naaman was a renewed man with regard to his former awful affliction. He was clean. We may only indulge our imaginations as to the joy and excitement of Naaman and those gathered with him at the banks of Jordan. Sweet Jordan; the same Jordan our Lord would, many years later be dipped in by John, according to the will of God. But now, Naaman is freed from his terrible leprosy. Every detail, however detached they may have seemed at the time, had fallen together as if guided by Divine decree, a truth we firmly believe.

Herein too is found a truth, somewhat concealed, but a truth nevertheless. It was not just that the leprosy was gone. “His flesh came again.” Dear readers, though our flesh and composition may rot and decay; and though disease and afflictions invade our frame, and corruption swallows us up, when the saints of the most High rise from their last Jordan in the resurrection, all these things will be swallowed up in victory. Like Naaman, we shall be whole again. Naaman did not get a new portion of flesh; Ills flesh came again! “And he was clean.” That awful and odious affliction was removed and his flesh came again pure as when he had been born.

Should someone ask, “If you are saying that that very flesh that once was clean had returned, where was it before? We would answer that it was in the same place the whole of creation was before God called it into existence. It was with God. All true believers will fail to see any problem. Furthermore, before this chapter is over we shall get another glimpse of the leprous plague that tormented Naaman. It did not simply disappear.

Leaving the subject now to another article, it is suggested the readers explore the remainder of 2 Kings 5. Further mysteries and strange matters will present themselves if the Lord provides eyes to see. Finally, keep in mind this one healing of one leper was of sufficient note that our Lord Jesus brought it to the attention of His hearers during His early ministry.

The Remnant

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II KINGS – NAAMAN THE LEPER

(Part three)

Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper (II Kings 5.1).

Naaman the leper was healed! The dreadful disease that tormented him was gone. "...And he was clean (2 Kings 5.14)." Whatever Naaman knew at that time regarding Jehovah, His glory or sovereign grace, we cannot say. He appeared rather ignorant of heavenly things. One thing he could know, however, was the servant of the God of Israel told him the way of deliverance. Elisha informed him all that was needful to be free from his uncleanness. Naaman alone was informed. Think of it! Lepers abounded, but Naaman only was healed. It was a miracle of the immense proportions and Naaman alone was the beneficiary.

Returning again to the reference in Luke 4.26, 27; our Lord makes this astounding reference to the deliverance of Naaman as follows: "But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." Jesus introduced to them a historical fact having great bearing on God's sovereignty.

"And he [Naaman] was clean." Among the wretched and pitiful lepers living out their miserable lives with this plague, and the Lord said there were many, Jehovah cleanses Naaman only. This point is beyond dispute. Both the Old Testament and New Testament records are completely clear; Naaman alone was made whole. So then, what may we learn by all this? First and foremost, it should be admitted by all who reverence the record we know as the Bible, that it positively was God's will and purpose to cleanse the leper, Naaman. Since no man on earth possessed the power to remove leprosy from another, any such removing must have been conducted by God's direction alone. The little maid in captivity could tell Naaman's wife of the prophet in Sanaria, but there was no healing power in her testimony. She could only relate the bare facts of Elisha being the prophet of God. The king of Syria could gather all the gold and silver he could muster: lade asses with royal raiment, send the whole bounty to the king of Samaria to pay for this hoped-for healing of Naaman, and yet God alone possessed the power to cleanse. None but frothing fools could dare deny such.

The several disappointments Naaman suffered in the presence of the King of Samaria, and the apparent scruffy treatment dished out to him by Elisha is enough for us to see, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

After considerable encouragement by his servants, Naaman dipped seven times and he was made whole. He was clean. The saving deed was done! Naaman could once again walk among the living unashamed, no more filled with self-loathing. The profound question, then: Was there any way possible Naaman might not have been cleansed? Was there at any moment in time, from the time Naaman contracted leprosy until he dipped in Jordan, for anything to be different than it was? Should even one little link in the chain of events fail some might boast that free will was on the throne and random

events only fell together because God permitted them. May God in His mercy forgive us that we might even think such a blasphemous notion. Bow then to the Dagon of Arminianism if this is so. But no link failed! Naaman was cleansed. That fact cannot be argued if you believe the dear Lord was telling the truth in Luke 4. Pity the poor soul that could conceive such ignorance.

We come again then to the words of the Lord in Luke 4: “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” When Jesus spoke these words He had shortly before come down from the mountain where He was sorely tempted of Satan. He then entered the synagogue at Nazareth where “there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias.” He opened the book and read from Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel....” And then: “And he began to say unto them, ”This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. Jesus was not telling them that these things were now fulfilled, but that this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This was the beginning of His gospel ministry, and they were hearing of it and all to come until all was fulfilled. And He introduced the singular account of Naaman the leper.

Jesus believed Naaman was cleansed. Why? For one thing, the Bible recorded the affair, and too, Jesus knew all things, being God in the flesh. A question then? How long had Jesus known of Naaman’s healing? Since He read in the sacred Scriptures? Or, from all eternity? “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15.18).” Since this work of the leper’s cleansing was God’s work, then Jesus must have know from eternity, yea, even before the deed took place, Jesus was fully aware of its certainty. 1. It transpired. 2. It was God’s work. Thus, God knew it as a certainty from the beginning of the world. God surely did not know that which would not come to pass. It was certain! Thus it must have been the will of God for it to come to pass. Predestination assured its certainty.

Jesus would never have told those in the synagogue Naaman had been cleansed of leprosy unless it had certainly been so. In His infinite wisdom He had known it from eternity as sure as He knew the rising of the sun or the four seasons that bring variation to all creation.

All this has been said to emphasize the necessity of seeing all things that took place in the Old Testament as predestinated events, conceived by the will of God and brought to pass by His power over all events of time and eternity.

Naaman’s reaction.

“And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant (2 Kings 5.15).”

We know not how far along Naaman and his company traveled prior to reaching the banks of Jordan. It is of no real importance to us as it certainly was not to him when he arose from Jordan after the seventh dip. With no other information afforded us, we are told “And he returned to the man of God.” One might think his first priority would be to hasten home to his wife, his friends, his beneficent king and with all the exuberance within him relate his seeming impossible deliverance from leprosy. What joys were contained within his heart at that moment we cannot know. They must have been many, each arousing him to give account of them all before those who may be interested. That was a wonderful day in Naaman’s life. Deliverance had come.

It must have been startling, both to Naaman and to his company, to see renewed flesh where only moments before the dreadful decay of death had its grip. For most of us, deliverance such as Naaman's would surely stir our emotions to the highest pitch. Think, if you will. Naaman daily lived with this death sentence called leprosy. Now it was gone. Naaman was a whole man again. What then, was his first order of business?

“And he returned to the man of God.” Remember. Naaman had never actually seen Elisha, the seer, nor had he conversed with him. His contact was limited to a brief word from Elisha's servant Gehazi. “Go and wash seven times in Jordan.” Suddenly, Naaman is drawn back to Samaria, to the man of God. Who may dare doubt Jehovah was ordering the general's priorities at this moment? Naaman must converse with this heavenly representative, Elisha, the man sent from God in heaven. He must see the man with power and authority. This power could only come from God, the God previously unknown to Naaman. Is this all speculation on our part? Hardly! Let us all think back to the great moments in our own spiritual lives when blessings from God's throne were conferred upon us. At such time what company did we seek? With whom were we eager to relate our experiences? Was it the Arminians? The Conditionalists? No, never! We went to our own company.

The Sanhedrin first apprehended Peter and John then thundered terrible warnings and dire imprecations at them for speaking in the name of Jesus. After what the Sanhedrin thought was sufficient abuse, they finally let them go. “And being let go, they went to their own company...(Acts 4.23).” To the child of God, comfort and solace is found among, and with, those of their own company, those who also know somewhat of those things each have experienced. Even so, Naaman was compelled to return to the man of God, his newfound company. Naaman had been turned.

“Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant (2 Kings 5.15).” Now I know! Where darkness once prevailed in the mind of Naaman, relative to the true and the living God, light now shined. This was not community knowledge. Naaman could not have learned this from all the wise men on the earth combined. Nor could he have dug it out of a thousand libraries. No! “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona [Naaman], for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 16.17).” Deliverance, and the knowledge of it, both derive from the eternal purpose of God to make whom He will whole. In this case, not one single leper, from the river unto the ends of the earth, had been favored with what Naaman had experienced and subsequently knew in his heart. Now I know! Blessed be the name of our God who both blesses His chosen and as well reveals Himself unto them.

Now I know! Almost anyone, from a near imbecile to a genius, can say, “Now I know” something. It may only be some little scrap of intelligence or perhaps vast amounts of particulars. However, until the Lord opens his heart, none, positively none, can say, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.” “Well,” some self-esteeming Arminian may say, “Naaman did not have to go to Israel and then Jordan to find out God. God is everywhere,” say they. “Just reach out to Him and he will reach out to you.” Even so thought Naaman when he said, “Are not Abana and Pharpar. rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?” Was not his view at that time essentially the same as the Arminian?

“God can be found anywhere.” Is this the word from the Lord or simply foolish notions dredged up out of the blinded heart? “I am found of them that sought me not (Isaiah 65.1).” How often have fools said, “I found Jesus”? Moreover, do not the self-serving false prophets pervert the word of the Lord when they plead with dead sinners to “Seek the Lord while He may be found”? Can an honest soul find

anything in our subject that suggests Naaman was seeking the Lord, or that he longed for fellowship with the Ruler of the universe? Or, was Naaman simply looking for a cure for his leprosy? Whatever Naaman was seeking, we feel certain the Lord had a plan for him, and it included every event that transpired, from the beginning to the end. If this is not so, then we beg the objectors to inform us what might have been left out of the whole series of events.

The message from the prophet of the Lord was as good as a message from God. In fact, it was a message from God. It can be safely believed that if God had given a message to Elisha for Naaman's ears, then it was eternally certain, unless God whips out declarations and decrees on the spur of the moment according to what He newly discovers these earthly creatures doing. This we must firmly reject! "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46.9, 10)." If you are numbered among them that fear God, you will bless the Lord for the passage quoted from Isaiah. We need not fear or dread, come what may, if God has truly declared the end (of all things) from the beginning (as far back as you can go) and determined the washing of a leper as well as the downfall of a nation that forgets God.

Naaman was the lone leper to be healed of leprosy in his day. This was a miracle of the utmost magnitude, yet it took place at an unspecified and lonely spot on the river Jordan. Only a handful of servants and traveling companions witnessed the magnificent scene. It should remind us that the great work of God for each of us often goes unnoticed and uncared for by the world in general. Even today, as we witness the blessed benefits from heaven in our behalf it is noticeable how often the blessing only redounds in our own souls, along with perhaps a few others that also love the Lord. A casual observers would soon dismiss it as he would all other things to which he holds no affections.

To our continual shame we confess, even those few who love Jesus as Lord and Redeemer need refreshing reminders of our exalted Physician and eternal Benefactor. A classic example is the following: "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me (Matthew 11.2-6)." Such an array of wonders ought never be dismissed or thought lightly of, yet they are. Even poor John needed a refresher lesson. The healing of Naaman was an unique and singular event in his day, but in the Lord's brief ministry healing lepers was a frequent manifestation of His authority and Godhead. This is obviously another of those dim figures of the Old Covenant days that shined brighter in the holy effulgence of Jesus, the Light of the World. With every miracle Jesus was bringing the shadows and types of the former days to full view. In a popular hymn it says: "The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day." We may paraphrase and say, "Naaman rejoiced to see that cleansing in his day." And, that was centuries before the thief was brought to the fountain filled with blood.

Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. From everlasting, before He spoke forth the universe with all its vast expanse; before he summoned the world from nothing and left it to lay void until He called forth all it contains, His eternal plans were formulated, sealed by His eternal power with everlasting and unlimited wisdom. In simple terms, God planned everything! Nothing is going to change. He planned what He sees and sees what He planned. Conditionalists, free-willers, do-gooders

and assorted other Arminian rabble may murmur like the Egyptian magicians at the miracles of Moses, but that is the way the Bible relates it.

The test

Since this is a continuing series of articles on predestination from Genesis to Revelation, it seems to be in order to examine the whole of the incidents in 2 Kings 5 so that we may determine if the proposition has been carried to the extreme or not. One thing of which we may be sure: The Old School Baptists will discover considerably more predestination in this context than will the Conditionalist foxes who would spoil our vines if possible. Those young foxes would, if given leave by the Lord, make havoc of our heritage before the tender vines could bring forth the ripened fruit. They cannot drink of this cup of joy when the fruit is pressed into it so they had rather see it all spoiled than admit its value. We shall, therefore begin before Naaman became a leper.

As we have before noticed there must be a fixed chain of events prior to any specific event we may desire to examine. There is no exception to the proposition. In the healing of Naaman's leprosy, and spoken of by our Lord as a certain historical fact, nothing could have prevented its occurrence or the Scriptures would certainly have been broken. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119.89)." Reader, do you believe this truth? For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Perhaps you say that only means the Bible and not the speech of Jesus. Is it not so that the account of Naaman is in the Bible? Then it is settled for ever as God's word. Naaman must have leprosy or it could not be a part of the word of God. "Then possibly," says the nay sayer, "Psalm 119 is speaking of the words of Jesus and not the record we call the Bible." Now, you who clutch free will to your breast as your darling idol, you have been gored by the other horn of your dilemma. If Jesus spoke of it as a certainty, and He surly did, then it would be impossible that it had not taken place. Jesus did not make this up. He drew from the absolutely predestinated facts of the 39 books we call the Old Testament. What a joy to be a babe in Christ, to be blessed to simply believe by grace what is taught everywhere in the word of God. On the other hand it must be a miserable lot to attempt to twist and turn the truth of God as an ironmonger would his twisted creation.

One of the simplest tests of predestination is to trace the previous generations that must, without fail, have given birth to the next in line for a David, an Abraham, a Solomon or a Naaman to come into the world. Should one person in any genealogical line fail to bring to birth the next in line, the chain would be broken. Say, for instance, Naaman's great-great grandfather (to be) had fallen in battle before giving seed to his wife, pray tell, how could Naaman ever be born? We are perfectly aware of the law of the brother (in Israel's law) taking up the widow so that the deceased would have seed but it would not be that seed; it would be another. Anyone that does not have sufficient understanding of common biological facts should certainly not aggravate their brain trying to disprove predestination.

All we have said about Naaman's birth line applies equally to the little captive Samaritan girl, the unknown person who carried this wisdom to the King of Syria, the King of Israel, the servant of Elisha, Elisha himself, and the servants of Naaman who begged him to at least give the proposed remedy a try. Each of these persons must have had an unbroken line from Adam and Eve to exist then, to carry out their predestinated role. The varied multitude of events and circumstances necessary to bring them all together would defy examination with any instrument but faith. But so it was. At the proper time for each, their little role in Naaman's recovery must be fulfilled.

On the darker side, it must be admitted that for this miracle to come to pass and Jesus give His striking lesson on its purpose, Naaman's leprosy must have existed. Had Naaman done anything, more or less, to bring this dreaded malady upon him than others had? If, as some believe, leprosy is a type of sin, then where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Suppose this little maid of Israel had been so strikingly beautiful and fair and her captors, having been away so long from home and the obvious comforts it would afford, had some dark evening led her to a suitable place and maliciously mauled her for their carnal pleasure. The prospects of death at that time would be great; and if not death, her disposition would no doubt have been so warped against these and all other Syrians that she would never have suggested the cure that awaited Naaman in Samaria. Remember, this was the time of war; the opponents were bitter enemies. Our proposed scenario is not at all a stretch of loose ideas to gain a point. She was living out her days in the real world, a world filled with unfettered passions abounding.

Enough proper examples have been given. Those who love free and sovereign grace will have no trouble at all in seeing the wisdom in them. Gain-sayers will continue trying to tear the God we love from His throne to a position of servitude to their beloved free will. They shall fail and soon, like the chaff in a windstorm they, with all their God-hating notions, will be blown away, leaving the good seed to serve its purpose in the hand of the Master.

Should the Lord bless, the subject will be taken up again with hope of finishing this chapter.

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