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A Man Despised

By Erwin Cowen

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."
(Isa. 53:2-3.)

Isaiah evidently is writing about the coming of Christ. Isaiah states that there would be nothing physically attractive about Jesus, at least not in the way that people look at their heroes and leaders. This fact was a great stumblingblock to Israel. They were looking for a man of great power and forces to deliver them from Roman oppression. They could not see in "a tender plant", or a "root out of dry ground", the force they were needing. Certainly, this Jesus did not have the appearances of the king to sit on the throne of David. God had promised that he would raise up one to sit upon this throne, and Peter preached in Acts 2:30, "Therefore bring a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn by an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." The Jews had pictured the kind of king this should be, and the kind of kingdom he would reign over, and they saw nothing in Jesus that fit their picture. They could not accept Jesus as this king because he wasn't what they planned for him to be.

People today are still struggling with the same problem. Many are still looking for an earthly king and kingdom. Men of today are still bold to change and alter God's plan for worship and services. Many have the idea that worship should be elaborate and appealing to men. Paul said, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:24-25.) Too, in 1 Cor. 1:26 he wrote, "For ye see

your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." Jesus said, "For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15.) As Jesus was despised by the Jews, he is still despised today by the way people treat his word.

To be despised and rejected of men carries with it the idea of belittling, looking down on, disregarding or holding in contempt, and the reason why people felt this way about Jesus was that they were disappointed in him for not being what they thought he should have been. We should be careful not to make the same mistake that the Jews made. There are many ways by which one can despise and reject Christ. Like the Pharisees, one may be more concerned with what is popular and pleasing to men than to God (John 12:42).

Let's Pull Together

By Ted Knight

In Iowa stands the historic Little Brown Church. Hundreds of weddings take place there each year. I am told that the preacher has adopted a beautiful farewell to the many couples. After the ceremony is over, he take the couple to the entry and says, "Before you go, the bride has the honor of ringing the church bell." He places the rope in her hands, and she pulls with all her might; but the heavy bell will not turn. Then the preacher turns to the groom and asks that he lend a hand and help his bride. Together, they pull and the bell turns, sending out over the countryside the news of another wedding. Then the preacher says, "As you got out into life, never forget that as long as you pull together, you can ring the bell."

In America, thousands of homes are being torn asunder each year because of our failure to pull together. Husbands are pulling one way, and wives are pulling another. As a result, our courts are filled with people seeking a divorce. It has never been easy to build happy and suc-

The true picture of Jesus helps us to love him more. Isaiah pictured him as a man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief. Why was he described this way? Well, Isaiah tells us "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Jesus was burdened, not by his own problems, but by ours. His sorrows and grief was not over himself, but over us. Paul said that God made him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He had no sin himself. When he went to the cross he took upon himself the sins of the whole world. He died that each of us might be saved. How could anyone see

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cessful marriages. It takes hard work and sacrifice to make marriage successful. It takes a commitment from both parties to pull together, even when one may not feel like pulling. My friend, if you want your home to be happy, then you must resolve to pull together every day, all the way.

This principle also applies to our work in the Lord's church. There is a great need for every Christian to pull together in the battle against Satan and sin. Pulling in different directions only aids our enemy and hinders the cause of our Master. Elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, soul winners, bus workers, and all others must pull together; and when that is done, you will see the church grow and souls saved.

Are you pulling together with those who are trying to go to heaven? Or, are you a part of the problem they encounter as they attempt to please the Lord? Think about it and resolve now to pull together for the good of all mankind, as well as for your own good.

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A Cloud of Witnesses

By Avis Porter

Hebrews is such a wonderful book! I know that God had a reason for not revealing its author. But guided by the Holy Spirit, he wrote such a masterpiece, especially the eleventh chapter.

When I study this chapter I like to visualize a courtroom scene and pretend an eloquent attorney being in charge. Do you also have this mental picture?

The author begins his case by telling us that, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Also he tells us that "Without faith it is impossible to please him for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

The writer then proceeds to bring
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The Conversion of the Samaritans

By Harold Turner

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did . . . And there was great joy in that city . . . But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:5-12.)

In his final words to the apostles, Jesus told them that the gospel was to be preached to every creature in every nation (Mark 16:15). In John 6:44-45 he made it clear that no person can come to the Father until he has been taught. The gospel is God's power to lead the lost to salvation (Rom. 1:16). There has been no conversions take place where the gospel has not been preached. Thus, Philip went into the city of Samaria to preach the gospel of Christ, and thereby provide these people an opportunity to be saved.

When Philip went to Samaria he faced a great challenge in preaching the gospel. In this city there was a sorcerer who had deceived the people for a long time. In verse 10 the record states, "To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." This man had all the people of Samaria believing that he was a great man of God. Philip faces the task of convincing the people that they have been deceived. We are not told just how Simon, the sorcerer, had bewitched the people, but evidently he had performed some type of magic, which led them to believe that God was working through him. Isn't it strange how easy people can be deceived by magic when it is done in the name of religion? The apostle Paul

warned that such trickery would continue. In 2 Thess. 2:9 he wrote, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." He then stated that these powerful demonstrations would deceive people and cause them to be lost; because they did not love the truth, that they might be saved. Too, in Rev. 13:13-14 the writer tells of one doing great wonders. "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do." Not everything that appears to be a miracle is of God. As Christians, we are to walk by faith in God's word, not in sight, or the way things appear to be.

It is not only necessary that Philip preach Christ to these of Samaria, but he must also convince them that his message is truly from God. In Heb. 2:3-4 the writer tells us that the word of salvation, which was first spoken by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. The word, he tells us, was confirmed "with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Philip confirmed the gospel he preached by doing miracles that could be clearly seen. It was evident that he was not deceiving the people with some slight of hand, as Simon had been doing.

It is important to note that though these people had actually seen miracles performed, their faith was not in the miracles, but rather in the preaching. Notice verse 12, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." The miracles had only confirmed the preaching, and the preaching

had produced the faith that led them to obedience. In Rom. 10:17 Paul wrote. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is dependent on testimony of facts.

It is clear that the conversion of the Samaritans followed the same pattern that Jesus gave in his final words to the apostles. He had said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16.) Isn't this exactly what happened in Samaria? Philip preached to them the gospel of Christ: when they believed it they were baptized both men and women and according to the Lord's promise, by doing this they were saved.

It becomes clear as one studies through the book of Acts that every example of conversion recorded follows this same simple pattern. It should also become clear that if we expect to be saved, we too are going to have to follow these examples in obeying the Lord.

CONTRIBUTIONS CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Agnos	5.00
Elizabeth	5.00
Gamaliel	10.00
Garfield	15.00
Twin Creek	10.00
Viola	5.00
Williford	5.00
Big Pond	12.00
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INDIVIDUALS

Joseph T. & Edith Robinson	60.00
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Are Your Sins Covered?

By Harold Turner

"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

(Psalm 32:1-5.)

In the above passage, David points out three things that he recognized about his sin. He recognized that sin needs to be covered. While the enticement to sin may appear beautiful, the sin itself is ugly. Sin causes one to feel guilty, dirty, and ashamed, and because of this we seek to hide it from the eyes of others. David also recognized that his efforts to cover up his sin had failed. Nathan, the prophet, made known to David that his sin was known to both his own people and to the Gentiles, who were blaspheming God's name because of David's sin. And, David learned the blessing of forgiveness, of God covering his sin. This lesson from the life of David provides us with some very practical lessons as we attempt to serve the Lord. Our sins need to be covered, and there is only one way they can be covered.

As we study this lesson, let us first consider why it is so important that our sins be covered. There are at least three things we need to consider about why our sins need covering. For one thing sin brings shame and embarrassment to the sinner. Isn't this one reason why people want to do evil under the cover of darkness? In John 3:19-20 Jesus said, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." People are ashamed for people to see them do many of the evils they do, and are embarrassed when they are caught. However, this is the most insignificant of the reasons why sin needs to be covered.

Sin needs covering because of what sin is in the eyes of God. In Hab. 1:13 the

prophet said to God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." The Bible uses several descriptive terms to picture sin as God sees it. In Isa. 1:5-6 God pictured the sins of Israel, saying, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." This is not a very pleasant sight is it? A body completely covered with rotten flesh and sores is a repulsive sight, but it is how God sees the sins of his people. Peter also gives us an ugly picture of sin in 2 Pet. 2:22, saying, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and, The sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." This is the sickening picture, but it is how God looks at sin. The sight of sin is so terrible that God can not look upon it, it is sickening to him, thus, sin needs to be covered.

A third reason why sin needs covering is the penalty placed upon sin. Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:2), and alienates man from God (Col. 1:21). Sin brings suffering and heartaches to man. Look at David's statements again in Psalm 32, is he happy? Read the story of the Prodigal son in Luke 15, and see the misery that sin brings to man. Sin also hurts others. Because of David's sin, his son had to die, and the sword was a curse placed upon David's house. Many innocent people suffered because of his sin. Don't innocent people suffer today because of the cheater, the thief, the murderer, the bully, the rapist, the fornicator, etc.? The world is full of suffering because of the sins of others. But the greatest curse of sin is the eternal penalty for it. The wages of sin is eternal death. In Rev. 21:8 the writer states, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." In 2 Thess. 1:9 the writer states that sinners "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Sinners are not going to live in the presence of God in eternity.

Unless sin has been covered, we will be forever separated from the love and goodness of God, and we will suffer throughout the endless ages of eternity in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

For the next part of this lesson, let us consider some things about how our sins can be covered. Men have put forth efforts to cover their sins themselves. David did this. For one thing he tried not to think about his sins, but this didn't solve his problem. In Psalm 51:3 David said that his sin was ever before him. He could not forget it no matter how hard he tried not to think about it. A person is in a sad condition when his heart is not pricked by sin. A second thing that people often try to do about sin is to deny it. David tried this also it seems. He tried to keep silent about it rather than to confess and acknowledge it, but it didn't go away. The only way to happiness is to repent and confess our sins that they may be forgiven. We may choose not to think about sin, we may deny it, we may try to blame others for it, we may try to hide it, we may try to run away from sin, or we may try to do good to cover up the bad, but there is nothing that man can do himself to cover his sin.

Sin can be covered only God's way. Jesus died and shed his blood to make it possible that our sins be covered. In Rev. 1:5 the Bible states that Jesus washes us from our sins in his own blood. In Heb. 9:14 we are told that his blood purges our conscience from dead works. And in 1 John 1:7 that his blood cleanses us from all sin. The dirt and filth that stains our soul by sin can be removed by nothing other than the blood of our Lord.

Until a person comes in contact with the cleansing blood, no matter how much he changes his life to do good, his sin stains are still present. Do you know when and where you can contact the blood of Christ? In John 19:33-34 the Bible shows that Jesus shed his blood in his death. He was dead when the soldier pierced his side and the blood came forth. In Rom. 6:3 Paul shows that one contacts the death of Christ in baptism, saying, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" And in the next verse Paul shows that we rise up from

A MAN DESPISED

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this picture of Christ and be indifferent toward him. Christ came to bless man, to help him in his helpless condition, yet, many still hid their face from him and esteem him not. How great must be the love of the Lord for sinful man -- "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.)

The writer of Hebrews 4:15 tells us that we have a high priest who is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. By his own humbling experience he can enter into the feelings of any man. He shares in our troubled moments. In Matt. 25:40 Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." When we hurt God's children, we are hurting him. When Paul persecuted Christians, Jesus asked, "Why persecuteth thou me?"

When Jesus took upon himself the form of a servant, he did more for man than could have been done in any other way. He made it easy for all people, of all walks of life, to come to him with all their problems and needs, and share them with him as one friend does with another. Christ put himself in our place, and lived with problems.

How do you really feel about Christ? Is he a man despised in your eyes? Do you love and appreciate him for what he did? It isn't with words that the true answers to these questions are found, but with our actions. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And in verses 23, 24 he said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." The real test is not in what we say, but in what we do. Many who claim to love him in word, reject his plan of salvation, worship and service. We show despite for Jesus whenever we reject his word on any point. Whatever he says should be sufficient for all of us, but such is not true with so many. Selfishness demands to have one's own way, and when this is true, Jesus becomes a man despised in our sight. May his matchless love penetrate our hearts lives and motivate us to be ever obedient to his every desire.

"Nothing can take the pleasure out of life more surely or quickly than putting too much pleasure into it."

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

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forth his witnesses, one by one beginning with Abel. He calls forth Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, the children of Israel, and Rahab, and tells what they accomplished through faith. In our terminology, he said, after citing example after example, "What more can I say?"

Then in general terms he mentions Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel. They possessed a deep living faith in God. Some were "raised-up" to deliver the children of Israel after they had fallen into idolatrous worship following Joshua's death. That seemed to be a constant repetitious thing with them.

And still, as if that is not enough to convince the Hebrew Christians of the importance of faith in God, he mentions what others, though unnamed, did to obtain a good report of faith.

It is most interesting to note that many of these witnesses cited for their faith are actually Christ's ancestors according to the flesh. Read the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew and the third chapter of Luke. Those named in the direct lineage are: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rahab and David. And although Sarah is not mentioned, she was indeed an ancestress of Christ in that she was the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac. How truly wonderful that these so strong in faith could be privileged to be a link in the genealogical chain leading to the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. How marvelous are the works of God!

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They never lived to see the Savior born into the world. With their strong faith in God, just imagine what wonderful Christians they would have been had they lived at a later age in time!

"Though dead they speak in reason's ear,

And in example live:

Their faith, and hope, and mighty deeds,

Still fresh instructions give."

(Robert Milligan)

He draws his case to a forceful conclusion by saying, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a

cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us..." (Heb. 12:1.) Could the Hebrew Christians resist such an appeal? But better still, can we?.

"Juvenile delinquency is proving that many parents are not getting at the seat of the problem."

"The church is a workshop for wide-awake Christians, not a dormitory for sleeping beauties."

"The church that spends is the church that wins."

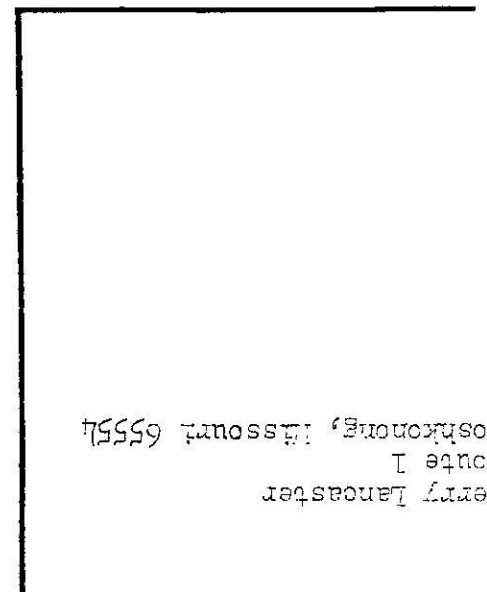
ARE YOUR SINS COVERED?

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being baptized to "walk in newness of life." We are baptized into Christ's death; his blood was shed in his death, therefore it is at this point that we come in contact with the blood that washes away our sins. In Acts 16:22 Saul was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins. In Acts 2:38 people were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Obviously, then, baptism is the place where we contact the cleansing blood. How blessed one is when God will cover his sins by the blood of Christ.

"No man can ever obtain peace with God by signing a nonaggression pact with the devil."

"The only place where success comes before work, is in the dictionary."



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