


ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION

WHY, WHY, WHY?

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GOD ON GOD

The world and his wife if they have been within earshot of Christianity will know that Jesus Christ died by crucifixion. They may not know why He died and could not be expected to know that God determined to His own grief that this was of all deaths the most necessary. Nor is it easy to understand why He should set His face stedfastly to reach Jerusalem to die vicariously and upon arrival withdraw to a garden and hold a cliff-edge colloquy as God's Son and associate with the Father to expedite the passion-to strenuously request that the cup pass quickly. Certainly the man and woman in the street has now little or no access to the Aramaic tongue in which Jesus pronounced his famous last words but I could wager that one in ten of people alive today will have heard the word **SEBAQTHANI** and associated it with the death of Christ-not least because of the world tours of Mel Gibson's film "Passion of the Christ". So behind each vignette in this album is this word that leads directly to "the cross".

What does this word entail? Does it tell us that contrary to all that fathers would do when their children suffer God the Father would turn His back in dismay? God forbid! Does it verify the cynical theology of archbishop Anselm who is often hailed as the epitome of orthodoxy and the veritable goldstandard in circles where the atonement is analysed? Was he right to urge the Christian constituency to run with his multiple notions of compensation one of which was that our heavenly Father turned on the full venom of His wrath on this obedient Son? God forbid! Does **SEBAQTHANI** mean that at Calvary's latest minutes a hitherto unprecedented tectonic shift in divine union and communion took place-a veritable breach? God forbid! Does it oblige us to believe that for love of you and me the love of the Father for the Son had to be suspended or as one wordsmith of a theologian once proclaimed in a Leicester pulpit that wrath is the same coin as love? For now till I kick this ball into touch in the final chapter I ask you, dear reader, to treat these opening queries –these masquerading imposters just the same. I must meantime reassure you that I have incontrovertible proof from the "fifth" gospel of Isaiah from God's own lips as to *how* God in heaven viewed God on earth..

THE JERUSALEM CHRONICLES

Fourteen times in his narrative John the divine writes an excerpt which brings out another facet of **SEBAQTHANI** though never does he tell of the hallowed word which greeted those who *saw the end of the Lord* in terms of His crucifixion. In John 4.3 we are told "He left Judea and went away again to Galilee". By the way the 'fourth gospel' is bookended in the Judean wilderness and much of its narrative set in Jerusalem despite this reference. The vivid Nicodemus story is played out under the moonlit sky of the eternal city. Passing the Sychar episode Jesus returns at **Passover** 6.4 and visits Bethesda. Despite the price on His head our Lord is city bound again

when He attends “tabernacles” to camp out for at least half a week in the city environs(7.2,14) and being pinned down by threat of death in 7. 14 our Lord is at the heart of the establishment teaching in the temple. He was ably supported by Nicodemus and by challenging the powers that be to mount a public hearing the secret disciple disarmed the militant priests and Pharisees so John can write “every man went to his own house” –the opposition was temporarily quelled and the soldiers did not play ball with the Jewish leaders. The scholars playground is John 8.1-11-the periscope or “look around” when our Lord treated in a manner agreeable to modernity an adultress and saw off her assailants by writing on the ground more of the Law than was to the kidney of that hypocrite set and rising to reassure that He did not come to judge but to save. John takes us through a swathe of incidents and speeches dealing with the Pharisees and having a bearing on the **feast of lights** or dedication 10.22 and on and on to Bethany in 11.1 where Jesus arrived from beyond Jordan just prior to **Passover** and so into the second phase of 125 dairy notes of the Jerusalem story of Jesus. Somewhere along the line of the 94 notes on the earlier ministry in the city there is a third “unlisted” Passover visit –maybe this 27th note in the Jerusalem diary chronicle of 5.1 marks the event-who can tell?

1 THE NUMBERS GAME

John 4.3 He left (let alone) Judea and went away again to Galilee

The counterpoise narratives in the synoptic(same look) gospels of Matthew Mark and Luke open the Galilean ministry extensively to the reader. John sweeps that significant and intensive ministry along with the work of the 13 nationwide and of the “seventy” into the words in John 4.3 “Jesus left Judea and departed again to Galilee” which may well connect with 1.43 when our Lord previously did precisely that. Another very agreeable solution to the “**third Passover question**” might be that Jesus had been to Jerusalem in the broad context of His Baptism tour when John pronounced him to be “the Lamb of God”.

What is of high interest to me is that our Lord when He knew that the Pharisees who were splendid statisticians of religious numbers had dropped to it that His disciples were baptizing more disciples than was John He withdrew to Galilee. Bearing in mind the feasibility of the idea above another considerable segment of Galilean ministry would pass between 1.43 and 6.4.

And now returning to deal with the second **SEBAQ**(the root verb of **SEBAQTHANI**) let us learn the fascinating lesson of the **WHY** within the **SEBAQ** for there is nearly always need to ask “Why” when Jesus “leaves aside” when God “allows things to remain” for a time however short of long in suspense. What exactly inspired our Lord to “allow Judea to be left aside for a year”? It was the zeal that counted disciples by the barrel-load-the religious style that wanted to spread a film of religion over the land but could never build a church against which neither the Romans nor the gates of Hell could prevail. To all who simply set out daily to search for a “lost sheep”; to win one more soul for Jesus I say watch this space. Jesus was familiar with the millions at Passover, with the multiple thousands by the Jordan and returned to Galilee of the Gentiles

where scarce was a city of less than 10,000 people and yet and yet John turns our attention to the Master's eye for one soul standing in the need of prayer or repair. So the *one- soul* vignettes of John come to mind—"the mother of Jesus", "Nicodemus", "the woman of Samaria", "the man with a 38year infirmity", "the lad with the barley loaves", "the aduress", "the man born blind", "Martha", "Lazarus", "Mary Magdalene", "Thomas", "Peter" and of course "The disciple whom Jesus Loved". In the Lord Jesus Christ we have a life of such quality and a heart of such lovingkindness and service of such a unique order that He can move a nation through a dozen dedicated hearts and on the spindle of sympathy and the fulcrum of favour He can conquer the world. Just think for one moment of Thomas moving India to Christ, of Peter galvanizing Rome in face of Nero; of the Gadarene demoniac evangelizing 10 cities; of the woman of Samaria winning the city over to the Christ, of John jointly with his Lord building in Asia Minor the land of a thousand churches. As Hudson Taylor said "One man with God is a majority".

So our Lord "let go" of the religion of Sadducee and Pharisee and that counting of "ninety nines" and sought the lost sheep. That's how he found you and me. We must needs go through Samaria. We have met the Master who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. We have met the "Man of compassion" who saw lost sheep and where others counted thousands He counted on one little boy and his surrendered lunch. Think today, "Whats the task the Master just for you has planned?" "What's the service royal ready at your hand?" Remember the star fish thrower who gave her discomfiting answer to the cynic "Sir, it made all the difference to this one!" It was Napoleon who commented that he had lead massed armies but reserved his reverence for Jesus who could inspire twelve men to change the world. Jesus is the bridegroom of the heart- the friend of sinners-the fairest of ten thousand-the lover of your soul.

He took my sins and my sorrows

He made them his very own

He bore the burden to Calvary

And suffered and died to atone.

Let me apologise for the "redraft" but Jesus said "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit"-those are not the words an unredressed disconsolation. The Aramaic **SEBAQTHANI** reads "My God why do I remain?" and that fourth cry atop the three in Gethsemane with the rending veil tell me the cup did pass quickly as the Lord requested of the Father-the door of Paradise swung open and He "who always hears" as Jesus taught us -even as His broken heart shed its last pulses of redeeming blood the Father answered with joy for the death of Christ paid it all and the judgment on man's sin was borne by the grieving Saviour in a Trinitarian compact of Grace and the parallel grief of the Father (Isaiah 53.10 where the Hebrew reads "In grieving He was grieved") turned to consummate joy. The richest victory Christ took to glory that day was the dying thief.

The dying thief rejoiced to see

That fountain in his day

And there may I though vile as he

Wash all my sin away.

In only one sense Jesus left Judea-to minister in Galilee and to reach in particular those for whom He had come. In another sense He could not leave it-for as David said "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning!" Salvation is of the Jews-Jerusalem is the foundation of peace-"in this mountain(Moriah) the Lord will provide-here is the city of the Great King.

2 BRIDGE TO THE WORLD

John 4.28 The woman left ~~her~~ **SEBAQ**(let remain) her waterpot **QOLATH**

Again we have an implicit "Why?" Why would she leave her waterpot. Was she remiss? Never! Was she in such a hurry she forgot? Never! Was she frightened and in a rush to escape the disciples? Not at all.

What then? Just reconnoiter the developing midday saga. Jesus initiates the interchange with her. He is thirsty. She queries why he would even speak to a Samaritan. The Lord bypasses her insistence on the place of worship as the saga moves to the level of spiritual worship. He ingeniously prompts the question about her married status "Bring your husband!" He says. This was and is the question of the hour-the Archimedian point around which turns so much of life. Shall we say she underscored or that He touched the raw nerve.

Then the saga developed further and migrated to the not insignificant issue of Who Jesus is? The woman surmised He was a prophet-a very good start. He demonstrated knowledge of her past and affirmed that He understood the future. Her incredulity was overcome and her awareness that Messiah would expound everything with "unequalled skill". The disciples were surprised at the bold initiative-we would call it "grace" of Christ. None asked what the "desire" behind it was nor what the "debated point" was. However John obtained the information and we are in possession of it. Back to the issue. Why did she leave her waterpot-and more -did she bind it to the cord or chain and fill it up and give Jesus to drink? Of course she did. So the pot was full of water and hence to carry it would have meant she could not run with the speed of a wheel to draw those menfolk to Jesus. This she did and the rest is history. So she left her waterpot-for minutes only. She gave her life and yielded her vessel. Jesus left heaven for a season and His life & ours was changed for ever

Vessels only blessed Master
Yet with all thy wondrous power
Flowing through us thou dost use us
Every day and every hour.

Every **SEBAQ** takes us back to the **SEBAQTHANI** of the cross. The commitment she made was nothing by comparison with that of our Lord Jesus Christ who said "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many"-the death of the cross. What she left was a clay waterpot-but it was the very joy of every disciple-they all drank from it as they shared the food they brought. The conversion of that Samaritan had worth and import for the twelve. The "water of life" -the "life-giving stream" of God's grace in Christ was the very source of the Samaritan lady's joy and the reason why she ran to bring others to the Lord.

I stooped I drank from that life-giving stream
My thirst was quenched my soul restored
And now I live in Him.

The bottom line is the lady by the well died to self and her life gone by and our precious Lord on the old rugged cross died redemptively to offer her and all-comers who would face their sin and follow their Saviour lifegiving grace.

The grand lesson from this journey of Christ is that it was not a detour but a vital itinerary. He “must needs” go through Samaria(A.V.) Jesus’ larger comment was “You shall receive power and be witnesses to me in Judea, Samaria and unto the utmost parts of the earth”(Acts 1.8). The story of Acts 8.5-25 signifies that Samaria was ripe for harvesting and as part of the larger narrative of mission demonstrates that our Lord saw it as a landbridge to reaching the world. Had Simon(the sorcerer) truly been faithful and real when he went quite early to Rome he could have been the first vehicle of the gospel to that great city. As it is we cannot know how far the ministry of the converted Samaritans extended but we do know that the “well” from which the woman of Samaria drank when she found living waters was followed by a baptism which made the believers effective.

3 ONE O’CLOCK NEWS


Johⁿ4.52 “Yesterday at the 7th hour the fever left him”. The healing of the nobleman’s son was the second Cana based miracle and the first byproduct of Jesus withdrawal from Judea. The Lord had been absolutely evenhanded and shown in his home area the self-same miracle power as in Jerusalem. This miracle is outstanding in that instantaneously at the distance of over 20 miles a word from our Lord’s lips had completely reversed the health of a dying boy.

There is a beautiful old hymn by Whittier that runs like this:

**We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down;
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown.**

**But warm, sweet, tender, even yet,
A present help is He;
And faith still has its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.**

**The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life’s throng and press,
And we are whole again.**

The presence of Christ as the “Word” was as surely felt in Capernaum as in Cana. The evidence for the power of Jesus as the *everlasting word* is explicit in this miracle. The Word  MALTHA of God who spoke the worlds into life exercises His ministry of life and health to such effect that an entire family of believers results when our beloved Lord limited by the stoop He took to don His seamless robe demonstrated divine omnipresence by His compassionate word.

The fever left him takes us to the word at the centre of this album—to **SEBAQ** the

root word of **SEBAQTHANI** and in connecting the healing and the cross it reinforces the theology of all repairs-of all areas of salvation-that “by His stripes we are healed” as *the Fifth Evangelist* Isaiah urged in his epoch making prophecy of the ministry of our Saviour and Lord. No fever would ever have left nor any sin remain unvisited by judgment unless Jesus the lamb **ܠܡܢܐ** and word **ܠܡܢܐ/ܠܡܢܐ** had come with His ministry of redemptive love.

Come to think about it-the whole parcel –the real impact of the “word” **ܠܡܢܐ** John 4.53 was that an entire household of the aristocracy of the time believed. This servant of the king became a true servant of the King of kings and all of this hinged upon the love that brought Jesus to die on our behalf. The words written by Pilate point to one “The King of the Jews” our beloved Messiah who cared so for His people that he more than all who wore crowns and were clothed in purple deserved the name of “King”. Moreover to declare his love fully he folded the lambs in His arms.

4 NO SOLO TASK

John 8.29 “He that sent me-my Father - exists with me and has not left me alone, for at all times I do what is beautiful to Him”. Our Lord was saying that He never never felt like Elijah. He was never single and alone. The very fundamental existence or essence **ܠܡܢܐ** of the Father continues with the Son.

In John 5.26 we read “As the Father has fundamental being that underlies all so He has given the Son to have fundamental life in Himself. This is to be understood as a fruit tree conveying its life to its fruit. God found a way to reproduce in perfect humanity His divinity without loss of eternal fundamental-so that the will, understanding and consciousness of being was common to the Father and the Son. Jesus ever lives yet He took flesh and never ceased to be God by becoming man nor ceased to be man in continuing as man and our mediator at the throne of God.

“Left alone” is an experience none relishes. The Saviour testifies that the Father always loved and always presently supported His beloved Son. This is as sure and firm, as true and tender at the cross as at the nativity at the stark brow of Calvary as in the stable bare. Why then do many cry “The Father left Him” “God turned His back” or “God could not bear to look on sin”. The truth is the other way round. God delighted in His well beloved not least when willingly He died in the substitutionary atonement for us. One can hardly think that Mary had more compassion than God the Father or that God had less empathy than the women at the cross or less endurance and long suffering than the posse of soldiers at the cross. The Father “left Christ to die” in the sense of allowing and along with the Son of God determining the atonement. The only thing at issue both in Gethsemane and at Calvary was the extent or prolongation of the passion. The “passing of the cup” was every moment traumatic. Our Lord in His perfect humanity did not despise to die on a cross but who would be so feckless as to say He enjoyed it-that would be cruel and wrong. He was both faithful and terribly disturbed in His soul; He was courageous but brutally used in the body; He was pleading with the omniscient omnipresent and omnipotent Father and yet faithful to His mission to the last breath purely because this atoning death was conceived in the heart of God before the fall and to it Father and Son and Holy Spirit were inexorably and wholly committed. Apart from that redemptive love the eternal purpose of God was impossible. It was God that set history and heaven on a course of love like this.

Down from His glory,
Ever living story,
My God and Savior came,
And Jesus was His name.
Born in a manger,
To His own a stranger,
A Man of sorrows, tears and agony.

5 YOU CAN SAVE SILVER BUT SILVER WON'T SAVE YOU

John 10.12 “When the wolf comes he leaves”. The shepherd that cares not for the sheep is off at the first sight of trouble on the horizon. One has to envisage the position of the shepherd in the mouth of the fold when the wild awakes and the wolf skulks around and seeks its prey. The very presence of the wolf is enough to see off the hireling. This “leaving”.

The parabolic “wolf” is a reference not just to general danger but to the ever present danger of the adversary of mankind-Satan himself. The truth is that none of the religious authorities or systems of the world are proof against Satan-and their staff are for ever fearful-for their defences against the adversary of souls is worse than useless. The only panoply that can deter the “wolf” is the armour of the Holy Spirit and prayer in the name of Christ.

The old adage has it “Jesus is stronger than Satan and Satan to Jesus must bow”.

But our task besides asking “Why” as in all cases of the use of **SEBAQ** is to investigate what leaving means here. Is the hireling off for ever? In this case it may be that at the cost of his job he is off. However it may well be that he is off to save himself a contest and once the Wolf has carried off his lamb the hireling is back with an alibi or deceptive explanation if one is needed for his master. He “leaves the sheep” entails allowing them to have no effective defence. His reason was lack of courage and self preservation. In the case of the cross the fact that the Father allowed the Son to die is part of the issue-and that was entirely necessary and fully consented to by our Lord. It is the fact that in both cases –that of the hireling and that of the Christ becoming vulnerable to death is at the heart of the issue.

Now we have occasion to ask “**Was Satan present at Calvary?**” The answer has to be that Calvary was surrounded by stalking and ravaging creatures –religious figures among them delivering recriminations, a thief belching out venom, soldiers with hammers and nails and that proven device of torture-the cross -employing cruel hands to bind the dutiful lamb to this engine of suffering. The concentric circles of Satan’s minions was however broken by the knot of the faithful women and Mary standing “under the cross” and John the divine who writes this story-and closer than all was the Father in whose heart this determined purpose to ransom and redeem was first conceived.

We all must acknowledge that what held the hireling in position was mammon. He earned his wages but when it came to the sacrifice of comfort-the endangerment of contest and the threat to life he was gone. It is only love-enduring-redemptive love that will stay the course. It was our beloved Lord who endured to cry in triumph “It is finished”.

At the cross at the cross where I first saw the light

And the burden of my heart rolled away
It was there by faith I received my sight
And now I am happy all the day.

6 LEAVING THE SHROUD

John 11.44 *Loose him and let him go* The raising of Lazarus is epic. This is not simply resuscitation. The Spirit of this man was gone 4days back. The entombment spelt the end of funeral rites and observations. It is past doubting that our Lord welcomed the opportunity to increase faith in the apostles through this miracle only rivaled by His own unique resurrection and eternal embodiment.

The **QUM** or resurrection power of God in Christ is glorious and not shared with any other creature be that man or angel. Moreover that power is owned by no other faith or religion. There is no firm historical annal of any resurrection to rival that of Christ.

Jesus used the Aramaic word **SEBAQ** alongside **AZAL** meaning “allow(him) to depart or go away”. Some men present would have unstrung the graveclothes that were wound as a shroud around Lazarus like a chrysalis. This “allowed” him freedom and provided him the use of his members-he could walk and his immediate reaction would have been to go away and have a proper wash and tidy up.

We get some insight into the cross and its physical reality. It was not a sanitised experience-like the entombment it had been preceded by anointing but it as surely as the nails bound the Lord the graveclothes bound Lazarus. Lazarus unbound becomes a sign to us all of “rising with Christ”.

There is a larger and a deeper truth and it is the antithesis of the truth of the cross – Lazarus was “allowed to be free and to live again”. Christ was “Allowed to remain on the cross until He died”. Christ’s spirit went away presently to the Father while Lazarus spirit came back to abide for a time among men. When our Lord cried **SEBAQTHANI** the agent of His loosing was the Father and the physical means was “death”. With Lazarus the agents were bystanders. There can be no doubt that those bystanders acted with all expedition and we know from the immediate “I thirst” and the cry “It is finished” and its sequel “Into Thy hands I commend my Spirit” that the death of Christ was also as expeditious as enabled the intervening remarks. Moreover the simultaneous “rending of the veil” and the remark of the soldier “Is He dead already” stand witness to our Lord’s immediate expiry. The work was done –the blood was shed-the curse was borne away-the lamb had conquered!

Lifted up was He to die
It is finished was His cry
Now in heaven exalted high
Hallelujah what a saviour.

7 SOVEREIGN VERSUS SANHEDRIN

John 11.48 *If we allow or leave Him in this way the entire people will believe and the Romans will keep coming in and controlling our region and holy place.* The Jewish authorities may have had a due regard for the continued robust faith delivered by Moses and the Prophets but they had a cowering fear that power was slipping from their hands as people observed the powerful working of the Spirit of God in the ministry of Christ and contrasted it with the letter of the law as read and observed in

obscure detail by the Pharisees. Even worse was the outright denial by the Sadducees of the life after death and the stranglehold they were attempting over things religious and secular. There was an all too obvious collision and for the religious leaders there was a prime time to act-and they thought they had arrived at the psychological moment when they could sway their factions and head off the momentum of Christ's popular movement.

The satanic thrust using Judas' love for money proved the precise catalyst. The leaders were on to it in a flash. Suddenly in the Garden two contrasting scenarios coincided. Christ delivered Him to the determinate will of God and Satan greeted his quarry with a betrayer's kiss.

It would be easy to imagine that this is God's interwoven plot but one must disentangle the evil of the "wicked hands" of men abetted by satan from the "righteous hand" of the Father in concert with His beloved Son. One must revisit the 3 prayers of Gethsemane and add the last prayer of the cross to see that beyond and over the most heinous sin and plotting stands the fairest Lord Jesus ruler of all nature and the omniscient sovereign Lord who in the fullness of time sent forth His Son who in glorious obedience won our salvation by the once for all sacrifice of Himself and the shedding of His atoning blood.

S SWEET PERFUME

John 12.7 *Let her alone for she has kept this for the day of my burial*

The perfume Mary of Bethany used was traditionally from India and it was the best. Service to Jesus comes in three bundles in Bethany. The "Bethany bundles" of appreciation come from a man who had been raised from the dead whose intimacy with the Master hit an all time high. He wanted to be near the one who raised him. He more than any alive knew the implications of resurrection. He was "seated with Jesus" and in a sense "raised with Him. His spirit came again and he could walk in the spiritual reality of Christ's power

Second, there was the service pack of Martha. She worked with all her heart and all her skill and gave all her strength and time to making the visit of Jesus one where His bodily needs were met. Martha saw the humanity of Christ. She was sympathetic to the distinctly human needs of the master and to these she gave her full attention.

Mary had one thing in mind. Jesus had shared with her the purpose of His coming in some depth. She knew he must die. She had bought the best perfume-spent a year's wages on it. For Judas it was a small fortune and a great waste. For Mary it was too little but it was not too late. It was precisely at the right time. She had chosen the moment. When the joy of her brother showed the hope of resurrection and when the heart of the Lord needed to enjoy the New Testament Eve who sat at the tree of life and was given the fruit of that tree by the grace of God. In her very soul and heart and mind she felt as deeply as any creature or any apostle then alive what Jesus had come to do-and she knew the depth of world-weariness and bitter-sweet of Jesus' heart. The Lord issued protective words-"Leave her alone" "Allow her" "Let her stay where she is". It was not the perfume held her there-it was the feet of the Master. It was being allowed to do the servant's part.

Lazarus welcomed Jesus with open arms and a kiss, Martha welcomed Jesus with rolled up sleeves and Mary welcomed Jesus with the towel of her hair. There was not

an ounce of pride-only tears and shared bitter sweet in her heart. Savour what you have in Christ, share the little while of sorrow till you see him over again and give without reserve everything you have and are to Him. He is worthy.

9 ORPHANED CHRISTIANITY ?

John 14.18 *I will not let you remain as orphans; I will come to you* The distinctive of Christianity vis-à-vis world religions is that though they have the same careful interest of spirits and of Satan they do not have the active accompaniment of the Holy Spirit nor the active agelong promotion that He brings to the Christian faith.

Within the walls of churches as Christ is truly confessed the Spirit moves. Ultra vallia there is not that same reliance on the “curse-breaker” who comforts believers by daily breaking the hold of evil and Satan on their lives so promoting holiness.

The spiritual “orphan” is deprived of immediate Parenthood. The spiritual “orphan” walks or rather stumbles through life without the assurance of the promises of the book that relays the promises of Christ to the prayer of faith. The spiritual orphan is mired in the morass of the world the flesh and the devil without the signals and defences of the Lord the Spirit whose armour enables each believer to engage sin and Satan on a daily basis.

The “little while” the Lord spoke about was scarce more than 50 days ahead-for these discourses were given probably as part of the ultimate Upper Room ministry. Thus a quite unprecedented period of spiritual experience lay ahead. It was one of “inner witness” and “outflowing from the inner man” of the outpoured Holy Spirit. It was centred not on the head but the belly for there is the symbolic centre of appetite. Thus the love that has an appetite for God is involved.

Orphans when they are little though they can scrounge a life are in deadly danger if they have not the benefit of a caring adult. The food of the word is the supply of the Spirit. The onset of the orphan state is simultaneous with the death of a Father and mother or parent. In this case the link with the Father was temporarily shaken in the death of Christ-but Christ gave a huge amount of teaching on God the Father in Jerusalem because of the utter devastation of the cross and on-coming loss of the consciousness of Father’s presence at death. The presence of God for the disciples was restored through the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit divine attend our prayers and make this house Thy home
Descend with all Thy gracious powers, O come great Spirit, come!
Come as a dove and spread Thy wings, the wings of perfect love;
And let the Church on earth become blest as the Church above.

10 THE COMPANY OF THE CURSE-BREAKER

John 14.27 *My peace I leave with you* The Lord had just spoken of “the redeemer of the curse”-the Spirit who continues the work of the breaking of the curse from every man who is Christ’s. He then adds “My peace I give to you. He emphasizes that His

gift is not precisely as the world gives. It is not trivial help or a grudging donation. It is not a temporary gift. It is like the fruit of the earth-it simply goes on year on year. It is like fruit nutritious and abundant and ongoing. In the case of the “fruit of the spirit” there are undoubtedly seasons of fruitfulness.

So we are given a Shalom that is ostensibly that of the Christ Himself. As He was united to the Father so are we. As He had access so have we. As he was led of the Spirit so are we. As He lived faithful so we are given faith and live by faith. As He loved we practice love daily.

Our Lord added that the slanderer of saints had “nothing on him” and he has nothing on us who are justified by trust in Christ and his redemptive love covering our past and the Spirit the curse breaker securing our present.

Christ’s gift is not just a word-nor just his personal commitment to us-it is the very Spirit of God within our hearts speaking peace to the soul-it is the inner witness. No other religion or person could do this for the soul. This is extraordinary giving. As the sat-nav to the motorist so is the Spirit to the soul. We are able to gain direction from the word day on day, hour by hour. This PEACE purchased by redeeming blood and continuing by the Redeeming Spirit is the fabulous retainable and irrevocable gift of God to the faithful. We have the company of the Holy Spirit-the Curse breaker in Aramaic ܡܠܟܐ

The glorious “Why” behind this reference is “Why leave the Spirit”-this inimitable gift? The answer is popularly given in the hymn

There is a redeemer Jesus God’s own Son
Precious Lamb of God,Messiah, Holy One
Thank You O My Father,
For giving us your Son,
And leaving your Spirit
Till the work on earth is done.

11 WORLD WEARINESS

John 16.28 I am allowing the world to remain and forsaking it to join the Father.

This world is not my home I’m just a passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door
And I can’t feel at home in this old world any more.

A concept seldom spoken of lies within these words-the Lord’s world weariness. There is something hugely unsatisfying in the world as currently organized if one could speak at all of real order. At best the world around us is a cacophony of organized politics that cannot and often will not meet the needs of man.

Notice how often John records our Lord’s bitter-sweet relationship with the world as organized in the early first century. Mankind over the centuries has asked the apt question “Why doesn’t God intervene?” meaning “Why does He not take things fully under His control?” The Kingdom of God is indeed within but its final breaking in with absolute power has been long delayed.

Without the knowledge of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit this world is a trackless wilderness, a perplexing maze, a churning and turbulent sea of danger and change.

There are 18 references to “the world” registered by John and in several of these the Lord’s “weariness” is traceable. The poet has said,
 “This world is too much with us –getting and spending we lay waste our powers.”
 I can only invite the reader to sift out the intriguing presentation of reality in the face of hypocrisy and the joy of abiding in the Father against the backcloth of earthly vanity in John 14.31, 15.18, 16.8, 16.11, 16.28, 16.33, 17.4, 17.11, 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.18, 17.22, 17.23, 17.24, 17.25, 18.36, 18.37.

In this plethora of references you will find a thesis and an antithesis. The first view is of a world out of joint –sold under the evil one and the second vision is of a world with hope in the person of the Lamb and the provision of the apostles and the church. The third view is a synthesis in which the chaining of Satan and the Messianic era rolled out worldwide brings with Shiloh the peacemaker a time of plenty, prosperity and spirituality unequalled even before the fall.

**Soul are you weary and troubled
 No light in the darkness you see
 There’s life for a look at the Saviour
 For life more abundant and free.**

12 PLAIN TRUTH

John 16.32-33 You will be scattered and leave me alone and yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. The Aramaic characterizes this “loneliness” as that of a ship devoid of a helmsman. The Lord never suffered such deprivation nor shall we. These things I have spoken to you (He said) that there would be peace for you in the world – but there is suffering-take heart for I have overcome the world.”

Jesus did not sugar coat the pill. The world presents us with pain. This life is not a bed of roses...but...but...but.

But... there is the Holy Spirit’s advent. Sin would be subject to powerful conviction; righteousness would shine like the midday sun and justice and judgment would yet run down like a mighty stream despite the devastating seasons of moral and spiritual drought ahead. It was because the Spirit thrust our Lord out with scripture in His soul to face Satan’s adversarial temptations that He lived in victory. By that means too we shall not be moved but put Satan to flight.

When Winston Churchill’s funeral service was broadcast to the world a great hymn went over the airwaves

Mine eyes have seen the coming of the glory of the Lord
 He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored
 He has whet the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword
 Our God is marching on.

But... heaven’s throne is just a prayer away and accessible at all times. God’s sceptre is held out continually. In all our pain and suffering we can lean on God. It was by His daily vow to the Father and the Father’s solidarity with Him that our Lord could face the huge demands of every day and it is no different for us. This is never better illustrated than in Gethsemane when Jesus prayed three times concerning the cup:

1. A REQUEST FOR ITS ACCELERATION

2. A RE-COMMITMENT TO ITS ACCEPTANCE

3. A DEVOUT SOLIDARITY IN COVENANT ACCENTUATED

At Calvary Jesus prayed “**WHY DO I REMAIN?**” with immediate response in the rent veil associated with His own interjections “It is finished” and “Into thy hands”.

But...Consider it is just a “little while” till we see the king in His beauty-till we tread the threshold of the Father’s house. In face of the fearful rumbles of earthly thunder and temporary lightning of its political creatures the steady ministry of the Son of God from heaven and the beauty of the church moving forward under the Spirit as an army with banners points to the long promised day when “the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.”

This world is not my home I’m just a passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door
And I can’t feel at home in this world any more.

13 INDEMNITY

John 18.8 I am He and if you are seeking me allow these to go their way The protective staff of the Shepherd is on display. The Lord cites Psalms 41.9 and 109.4-8. He also emphasizes that care proposed in John 6.39 and 17.12. It is an evergreen inspiration and assurance to us all that the Master said “It is the will of the Father that of those that He gave me I have lost none and I will raise them up”. The Christian may be tried and the believer must face the oracle of death but we are safe.

Safe in the arms of Jesus
Safe from corroding care
Safe from the world’s temptations
Sin cannot harm me there-
Free from the blight of sorrow
Free from my doubts and fears,
Only a few more trials
Only a few more tears.

Such safety springs from the sovereign choice of the Father whose mighty hand cups that of His dear Son from whose lips drops the promise of our salvation and resurrection and whose Spirit is applying redemption from the curse to our living day on day lending a surge of confidence in days of joy and a due wariness to our walk in darker days.

But why does this **SEBAQ** -this “let these go their way” indemnify the disciples? It can be for no other reason than that the Great Shepherd of the sheep has a work for each to do. The entire passion centred on the Lamb and left the disciples immune from prosecution. The effect humanly was the apparent failure of the enterprise our Lord began. The disciples huddled behind locked doors-the movement was in abeyance-miracles suspended-multitudes were no more.

To this impasse also our Lord held the key. The Spirit would be outpoured in fullness. Men who cowered in the shadows would walk tall in the light, miracles would abound again and multitudes would gather at Pentecost.

The Aramaic imperative **SAEICU** demands compliance from the pursuers who already fell to earth as corpses at Jesus first word. Despite the act of Peter in cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest to this command the band of men was bound. We can

be in no doubt that our Lord had come as a redeemer to Zion and set his face stedfastly to pay the ransom our souls required. The vicarious atonement only required a vicar but nothing less could satisfy the justice of God and Christ. This event was not a revolution or uprising –it was God’s Passover. This Great Shepherd of the sheep would provide the sacrifice as the Lamb of God that is the *eternal security* of all who repent and trust and obey.

Dear dying Lamb thy precious blood shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.

14 REDEMPTION GROUND

John 23.23 *When you allow a man’s sins alone they are left or released and when you hold them they are held(for judgment)* The **SEBAQTHON** question “Why do these sins remain or abide (unpunished and unvisited)? Why are such sinners left free from prosecution?” has to be asked.

Do men who name Christ their master have automatic powers to forgive sins? Does this capability inhere in the united body of the apostles intrinsically and furthermore in the church per se? The answer to both queries has to be a resounding “No!” Sinners do not forgive sinners.

The only Mediator and the sole Judge of mankind is God in Christ. By the grace of His atoning work forgiveness emerges as the cardinal benefit of which by the Holy Spirit He is the sole arbiter. However He wills and designates forgiven and pastoral disciples to relay and preach the assurance of sins forgiven to all who truly repent and believe. The pronouncing of absolution insofar as it is a proclamation of the gospel inhering in the sole once for all atonement accomplished on the cross may be undertaken but if it relates to an office of men to counter or enterprise an artificial and added office of redemption whether by a sacred order or by raising leavened bread at an altar it is void of value.

By contrast the need to direct the penitent gaze to the cross- to our Highpriest and His sacrifice requires a context of preaching and prophecy together with the conviction and assurance of the Holy Ghost. This work was committed to the apostles and their heirs apparent in the preaching of the gospel of Grace. Sinners are free because the Lamb of God was bound to the altar in the bitter-sweet act of grief and pleasure that is our Redemption. As it is the declaration of parliament where its writ runs that slaves shall be free so it is the declaration of our sovereign Lord that souls shall be pardoned and that by His grace alone who gave His life a ransom.

Come weary soul and here find rest
Accept redemption and be blest
The Christ who died by God is crowned
To pardon on redemption ground
Redemption ground the ground of peace!
Redemption ground Oh wondrous grace!
Here let our praise to God abound
Who saves us on redemption ground.

CONCLUSION

Now for the vital linkage of the cry from the cross to the inner mind of God expressed through the prophet Isaiah-the detail I promised at the outset.

(1) The basic meaning of the Aramaic SHEBAQTHANI (Matthew 27.46 & Mark 15.34) is "Why do I remain?" as confirmed by Dr George Lamsa a native speaker. He [our Lord] remained (true to the end) It has been important to revisit this deeply theological word at the core of the gospel. It is also vital not to counterpoise Father and Son in reconciliation. John of all theologians maintains the QNUMA identity of Father and Son at all times. The cry of Christ as I explain in my monograph "Lest I forget Gethsemane"(or) "The Cup" has to do with commitment to the Father and to us not disruption of the trinity or estrangement and certainly not the death of God. The three prayers of Gethsemane pinpoint different aspects of "the cup" (1) Let this cup flow quickly but exactly as you will not exactly what I would wish (2) This unexceptional cup I must drink-so be it Father -a full acceptance petition (3) A third time He went away and prayed intimately relishing the companionship of the Father despite the pain ahead. When the Christians who are apostles lead others to the cross and the great SHEBAQ of Christ taking the sin burden and **remaining under it to the last God Himself accords with this gospel and considers their sin no more. In the first instance sinners must themselves "put away" or "lay aside" their former life. It must "remain" and be permitted to remain a bygone. Jesus SHEBAQ was His utter **bearing to the last without sin and reviling -the whole burden of our sin**. Our SHEBAQ is utterly unburdening of our sin-it cannot be "held"-it must be "released" to be no more a debt in which we are held but one from which we are released. The concept of SHEBAQ has to do with debt. So "My God My God why have you let me remain" has to do with the grossly heavy burden of sin and grief our Lord endured and from which He appealed as He came to the extreme end of fleshly resources and His great heart was breaking and He had in this extreme act completed His atonement by His intercession from the cross and shedding His blood without and within(at first unseen& then upon the sword thrust evident to all) on the cross. While instant upon his prayer He gained release at length from the painful cords of death -still He bore the absolute penalty of sin. He made His soul an offering for sin.**

(2)To move on to Isaiah 53.10 we have here the selfsame sentiments in the heart of the Father as expressed by the Son -that mutual grief. The Father could not suffer physically but His grief of spirit was in parallel with that of the Son. "And the Lord is willing or inclines to continually smite Him with stripes crushing His spirit He makes Himself sick" (cf. Micah 6.13 where God makes Himself sick by striking others - clearly He turned to making Himself sick for them! Hebrew ילֵךְ *Hiphil with the reflexive meaning*) "because You will place His soul or physical life as an offering -that by which one contracts guilt" (Numbers 5.7-8) (Hebrew מִנְחָה) The placing of the life of Messiah is described by the Hebrew verb מִנַּח which means "to constitute" "lay as a foundation" and "name Him" - also "to pledge" "to treasure for the future" and "to prepare" This is the counsel of the divine will in eternity past. He will see seed, lengthen His days and the "pleasure" of the Lord will finish well or be successful in His hand Here we see the desire of the Lord is for seed - those who receive the divine nature. Like "birth" this of necessity involves pain. As husbands and wives take "pleasure" in a new-born so the Father and the Son and the Spirit take pleasure in the willing obedience and glorious result of the cross. In summary God the Father grieved when the Lamb was grieved and God the Father was in (in-house with) Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

FINIS

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