

ism. Her deceitful claim was that, unless one knows “the depths of Satan,” one can never fully appreciate the greatness of God’s rich grace of forgiveness (24)!

Concerning Jezebel, Christ declared, “I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (21). Was this because God loved her and was longsuffering to her and her reprobate followers? No! The Lord Jesus promised to “cast her into a bed [of sickness]” (22), adding, “I will kill her children with death,” so that “all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts” (23).

Turning from these three individuals (Jeroboam, Ahaz and the prophetess Jezebel), we will next consider a group of people: the false teachers mentioned in II Peter 2 and Jude. Do either of these holy men speak of those reprobate church leaders (Jude 4) as the recipients of God’s longsuffering or grace? No! Instead, they stress the certainty of their punishment (II Pet. 2:1, 3-6, 9, 12-13, 17; Jude 5-7, 13-15). God will execute His severe judgment upon these false teachers in accordance with His eternal plan! As Moses says, “their foot shall slide in due time” (Deut. 32:35).

Our last biblical example is Judas, whose eternal reprobation is underscored by Scripture (John 6:64, 70-71; 13:18, 21, 26-27; 17:12). Judas was a thief; he had the bag and was pilfering all along (John 12:6; 13:29)! So why did God not cast him into hell even then? First, Judas’ betrayal of Christ was predicted in the Old Testament (Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14, 20-21; 109:6ff.) and so in the providence of God this had to come to pass. Second, God had appointed Judas’ treachery as a crucial part of the way in which the Lord Jesus would go to the cross, where He would die for all the sins of His people.

Christ did not speak of any divine love or longsuffering for Judas that desired his salvation. Instead, the Son of God proclaimed regarding the traitor, “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! *it had been good for that man if he had not been born*” (Matt. 26:24). This is true of all who die in impenitence. All those in hell wish that they had never existed!

Christ declared this judgment upon Judas (and all who lead others into sin): “It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones” (Luke 17:1-2; cf. Matt. 18:6; Mark 9:42).

God does not immediately cut off the reprobate not because He is longsuffering to them but because, in His inscrutable justice, He is giving them more time and opportunity to heap up wrath unto themselves (Rom. 2:5). Jehovah’s purpose with the impenitent ungodly is “to shew his wrath, and to make his power known” (9:22).

Whereas God puts up with or forbears or “endure[s] ... the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” He does this “with much longsuffering” towards His elect “that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles” (22-24). Reprobation and forbearance serve God’s election and longsuffering towards His beloved people in Jesus Christ!

Rev. Stewart

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God’s Longsuffering and the Reprobate Ungodly

In the last five issues of the *Covenant Reformed News*, we have been setting forth the Bible’s teaching concerning the divine attribute of longsuffering. Now we shall consider this perfection of God in connection with the impenitent wicked.

We start with the founder and first ruler of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam I, whom Scripture repeatedly calls the man who “made Israel to sin” (e.g., I Kings 14:16; 15:26, 30, 34; 16:2, 26; 22:52; II Kings 3:3; 10:29; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28). This wicked man rebelled against the house of David and, hence, against Jesus Christ, the sole king and head of the church, whom David typified. Jeroboam forsook Jerusalem (a picture of the true church), its temple (where Almighty God especially dwelt), its altar and sacrifices (which pointed to Christ’s satisfaction for sin) and the Aaronitic priesthood (which God had ordained). Instead, Jeroboam began a new dynasty over the northern tribes and established idolatrous shrines at Dan and Bethel, where non-Levitical priests offered sacrifices to the two golden calves that he had made, in keeping with his new religious calendar (I Kings 12:28-33).

Given the height of Jeroboam’s abominations, why did not the Holy One of Israel cut him off sooner? It was certainly not that there was any divine love for him!

One factor is that God willed the development of the false church in the Northern Kingdom over against the true church in the Southern Kingdom, also called Judah. This served to heighten the antithesis and to provide New Testament Christians with an Old Testament example of the true church and the false church existing side-by-side at the same time (*Belgic Confession* 29). Another reason is that Jeroboam had to live long enough to have a regenerate son, Abijah, of whom was “found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel” (I Kings 14:13).

Our second example is King Ahaz, ruler of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (rather than the Northern Kingdom of Israel, established by Jeroboam). You can read about Ahaz’s gross idolatry at God’s temple in Jerusalem in II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28. Again the question arises, Why did God not slay him earlier? It was not that God was longsuffering towards him and desperately tried to convert him! Rather, Ahaz must be succeeded by the son of his own loins, the pious Hezekiah, who would begin cleansing the pollutions of the temple on the very first day of the first month of the first year of his reign (II Chron. 29:3, 17).

Our third individual is found in the New Testament Scriptures: Jezebel, that wicked woman in the church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29). She was a false prophetess, who promoted fornication and idolatry in the church, which she defended by her antinomian-

(continued on p. 4)

Christ, Original Sin and Pain

Our readers will recall that in the last *News* we discussed whether our Lord could be sick. I answered in the affirmative for He was like us in all things, sin excepted (Heb. 4:15). The thought occurred to me that the fact that our Lord was without sin, even though He was born into our human race, requires some further explanation. In fact, one reader asked me personally how that could be: How could the Lord escape original sin and original corruption, for He was born of Mary and in the line of Adam?

The answer to this question is not stated in so many words in Scripture. The answer must be deduced from other truths the Bible tells us about our Lord Jesus Christ.

So that all our readers may know what original sin (consisting of original guilt and original corruption) is, a short explanation will assist us.

Original guilt is the guilt imputed by God to the whole human race for the sin Adam committed. That is, Adam was guilty before God for eating of the forbidden tree and he transgressed this divine command as the federal head of all who descended from him. What then of Christ Himself, for He was born a member of the human race?

The central proof for original guilt is found in Romans 5:12-14: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

Although the truth of the above text is denied almost universally, it stands firm against all enemy attacks. Adam sinned. Death came into the world because of Adam's sin. Why did death come on all men, even though they had not sinned as Adam did? Death came on all because all have sinned in Adam. People go to hell because mankind is guilty in Adam of eating of the forbidden tree. God also, of course, punishes the impenitent for their *actual* sins, the sins they commit personally.

Furthermore, Adam was a "figure" of our Lord, for Christ was eternally appointed to be the federal head of the elect. The result is that the righteousness that our Lord earned on the cross is imputed to all the elect for whom Christ is head and for whom He died.

Original corruption is the lot of all men, for death, which is the penalty for sin, came on all men. Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). All men are totally depraved (which is what death in sin means) who carry in them the corruption of sin. Total depravity is the punishment on guilty sinners that comes on all from guilty Adam.

Our Lord escaped original guilt because, although He was a part of the human race, His Person is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit who preserved Him from the corruption that is passed on from parents to children through conception (Luke 1:35). And so our Lord was like us in all things except sin.

Some also use the following argument: guilt is transmitted through the father; our

Lord had no earthly father; God was His Father; therefore, Christ was without original guilt and corruption. In this argument, the last three statements are true but where is the proof that "guilt is transmitted through the father"?

In connection with this discussion, another reader wrote asking the following: "Could Christ feel pain? Could He have an accident?" I take the last question to mean, Was Christ subject to unintended injuries through some mishap?

In answer to the first question, yes, of course, He could, and did, feel pain. He could feel the slap in the face during His trial by the Sanhedrin. He could feel the crown of thorns pressed into His head. He could feel the whipping by the Roman soldiers. He could feel the excruciating pain of being nailed to a cross and hanging from those nails in the heat of the blazing sun. He felt the wrath of God as the very torments of hell, a pain we shall never have to feel, if we believe in Him who suffered for us. He suffered terribly in both body and soul.

The question about "accidents" is somewhat different. The reader should understand, first of all, that there is no such thing as an accident. We might be hurt if something happens to us that we did not expect. But God's providence determines all things down to the smallest detail (Eph. 1:11).

Nothing could happen to Christ without His will as the eternal Son of God. He could not drown in a ship sunk by a storm on the Sea of Galilee. He could not be killed when the wicked tried to push Him off a cliff in Nazareth. Because He was "true God of true God" (as our beautiful *Nicene Creed* expresses it), nothing could take Him by surprise or happen to Him without His will.

But whether Christ's divine nature, which is omniscient, always revealed all He knew to His human nature, I do not know. He knew, without being told, what His disciples were thinking. He knew that the cross lay at the end of His ministry. He knew what the Jews would do to Him, what Pilate would do to Him and what God would do to Him.

But did He know the identity of the woman who touched the hem of His robe? He asked, "Who touched me?" (Mark 5:31). Was that merely to bring the person forward? Or did He really not know? His divine nature did but did it always reveal things to His human mind? I do not know.

This is part of the great mystery of Immanuel, God with us. I know what the *Creed of Chalcedon* confessed: that Christ united in His divine Person both the divine and human natures without separation, without confusion, without mixture and without change. And I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day (II Tim. 1:12). This is enough and this is my salvation!

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