

431 The Key

In last week's Reflection, 430 "An Innocent Party", we gave thanks afresh for Jesus' shedding His blood and laying down His life, thus providing the One Sacrifice in human history which has made possible the forgiveness of all human sins by Almighty God our Creator and Father. Jesus' sacrificial death was followed by His resurrection, which completed God's victory over sin and death, and demonstrated beyond all doubt, both then and ever since, that Jesus is telling the truth – that He really is the Way, the Truth and the Life, that He really is the Resurrection and the Life (John 14.6 & 11.25).

However, we continue to see that the significance of these divinely-wrought deeds – despite being globally unique, central and permanent – is widely ignored, as for instance in science, education, politics, philosophy, business, media, culture, human relationships and problems. At the heart of this ignoring is the denial of Almighty God as our Creator (eg., Romans 1.16-32), He being replaced by ideas of a Big Bang and Darwinian evolution which turn out to be scientifically ridiculous when examined. From this fundamental Creator-denial flow further denials: of Christ as God's Son and unique Redeemer; of sin itself; and of human responsibility and accountability before Almighty God our Judge. Truly, "Professing themselves wise, they became fools" (Romans 1.22, KJV).

In Exodus Chapter 19 we learn of the children of Israel in the wilderness reacting with terror when exposed to the presence of the Lord God. The Lord had spelt out His covenant with them, and the people, rather surprisingly, had accepted, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do" (19.3-8). Then the Lord gave precise instructions to Moses regarding the people, so that they could survive His imminent visit to them. They were to sanctify themselves for two days, to wash themselves, to "come not at (their) wives", and they were not even to "touch the border of the mount", on penalty of death (19.9-15).

When the day came, in the face of "thunders and lightnings ... a thick cloud upon the mount ... the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ...", all the people in the camp trembled (v.16). Moses duly "brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount" (v.17). Now, "... Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire... the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace ... the whole mount quaked greatly" (from v.18). The Lord told Moses, "Go down, charge the people, lest

they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish" (v.21); and the priests, who were to come "near to the Lord", were to sanctify themselves, lest "the Lord "break forth upon them" (vv.22,24). When confronted with the glory of God, little wonder that the people "removed, and stood afar off", for if God spoke to them directly, rather than through Moses, they would die (20.18-21).

Now here is the crucial point about all this for Christian people such as us, who are saved by faith in the shed blood of Christ under the new covenant of grace: God has not changed! He is still the God of Sinai, whose holiness and righteousness, when confronted with unforgiven sinners and their unforgiven sins, prompts Him to "break forth upon them" in judgment (as in Exodus 19.22 & 24).

These days this realisation, about divine "wrath" still being in place, with divine judgment to come, is deeply unfashionable; "Surely not!" is the common cry, for God is loving, kind and forgiving. Thankfully, Yes He is (eg., Hebrews 12.18-24).

But we must never, ever forget that the Lord God displays this more gracious side of His character because Christ's innocent blood, having been shed, has made possible the granting of God the Father's forgiveness. That forgiveness freely flows when Christ's blood has been claimed by the repentant sinner, who then receives all the Gospel blessings. Until Christ's blood has been so claimed, the perfect God and the fallen sinner still have "unfinished business" over sin and its consequences. In such a case, alongside His mercies in Christ, God's holiness and righteousness, His forbearance and warnings, displayed so awesomely on Sinai, remain as much in place as ever, leading eventually to His righteous "wrath" and judgment if Christ remains spurned.

These Gospel Facts set out so clearly in God's Word initially involve the Bad News of God's wrath and impending judgment, which will duly take their course unless forgiveness through Christ is sought; and then comes the wonderful Good News, received freely and undeservedly by our acceptance of the Person and Work of Christ.

As ever, Jesus Christ is the Key. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (from John 3.36, KJV).

Thanks be to God for His love in Christ, and thanks be to God for His solemn warnings.

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