

# Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints  
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages  
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## Put to Death Flesh, Raised Spirit

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).*

All Christians rejoice in the truth of the resurrection of our Lord. But the details of what that resurrection entails, as viewed by most of Christianity, diverges significantly from what is outlined in the Bible. This divergence comes partially from an incomplete understanding of Christ's ransom for all.

The basis for salvation is the substitutionary atonement provided by the death of Jesus. The Apostle Paul states it succinctly in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

What could be simpler? It satisfies the claim justice has on the human race and provides an opportunity for salvation to “all.” Jesus is the ransom. His human body paid the price for the sin of Adam. So Jesus died.

Next came the resurrection. But an interesting question arises. If the body of Jesus was the ransom price, how can it be resurrected without also renegeing on the ransom payment? If Adam's death would have been eternal without a ransom, would not the giving of a ransom price likewise mean eternal death for the man Jesus? In the strict exchange demanded by justice, it must be so. Consequently, when Jesus was resurrected, it could not have been a restoration to his human manhood. Rather, it was a new life form on a completely different plane of existence. Jesus was a new creation! He was a divine creation! Something that had never existed before! He became an immortal being like God himself.

This is not the typical view of Christianity. Most Christians believe that Jesus' resurrection was in the **flesh**. Or more precisely, they see the resurrected body of Jesus as some kind of **glorified flesh**. As proof of this they point to Luke 24:40, where Jesus visited his disciples and showed them his wounds. Though this text seems on the surface to provide some foundation for their view,

harmonizing it with other scriptures provides a more satisfying picture of the reward that Jesus received from the Heavenly Father for his obedience unto death.

As stated earlier, a ransom cannot be given back. In John 6:51 Jesus makes it clear that his sacrifice is still efficacious and therefore was never taken back. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

His flesh is given for the life of the world. Divine justice accepted it as a full payment. If it were taken back, the life of the world would be forfeited once again.

The scriptures clearly state that Jesus was given a different life, a new life on the divine plane. Peter described this beautifully in 1 Peter 3:18. “For Christ also hath once suffered<sup>1</sup> for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” He was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened [raised, made alive] in the Spirit.” In the Greek it is even more emphatic:

θανατωθεις μεν σαρκι  
having been put to death indeed to flesh

ζωοποιηθεις δε πνευματι  
having been made alive but to spirit<sup>2</sup>

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The “μεν ... δε” construction conveys the thought “on the one hand ... on the other hand.” Thus was Jesus raised a spirit creature on the divine plane. To this time, only the Father possessed the divine nature. Now he shared it with his beloved son.

This spiritual resurrection also helps us to understand what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:50, “Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh** and **blood** cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”

As followers of Jesus, we have the same hope of future life. If faithful, we too will be rewarded with the divine nature. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (1 Peter 1:4).

### GLORIFIED FLESH?

But what about the concept of a glorified flesh? Did Jesus demonstrate such a glorified flesh to his disciples when he appeared to them in Jerusalem? The account is in Luke 24:36-39. “Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”

Jesus’ sudden appearance in a closed room terrified them! They thought they had seen a “ghost”! This is probably the only place in scripture where the word “ghost” would be an appropriate translation. Jesus wanted to calm their fears. His purpose in appearing to them was to assure them that he had been raised to life again as promised. He wanted them to be assured it was really him. As evidence, he showed them the terrible wounds inflicted by the crucifixion.

The question is: Was this the glorious resurrection body of Jesus? If it were, the prospect of Jesus carrying horrible wounds in his body for the rest of eternity would be troubling. Clearly there must be something wrong with this thought.

But Jesus provided the answer in his own words. He said that they were **not seeing** a spirit. What they were seeing was a special manifestation provided to convince them that Jesus was alive again. It was really he! They were not seeing his glorious spiritual body. He could not show them his real body without doing them damage. We know this because when Jesus did show a reflection of his glorious spiritual body to Saul on the road to Damascus, Saul was blinded by the sight! (Acts 9:3,4,8,9, 26:13)

But there is something even more compelling than this. The Apostle John was present when Jesus appeared to the apostles. If this appearance was the glorified body of Jesus that he saw, we might have expected him to write about

it in glowing terms. But John wrote something entirely different! “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

John here says that he did **not know** what a glorious spiritual existence was like! But he had the hope that at the future time of Jesus’ return, they would all “see him as **he is**.” So seeing the beautiful and glorious form of Jesus as a divine being must wait until each of his followers is resurrected from the dead themselves.

When relating his experience in meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus the Apostle Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15:8, “And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” This phrase, “as one born out of due time,” is interesting. Paul knew that at the second advent he would see Jesus’ glory. However, his blinding experience at the start of his Christian career was something given early, **before** the due time.

The point here is that the body that Jesus showed the disciples at Jerusalem was not his spiritual body. Jesus is no longer approachable by man nor can be seen by man! Again, Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6:16, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.”<sup>3</sup> So the body in which Jesus appeared after his resurrection was similar to previous angelic materializations. Jesus did so because it was evidently necessary that the disciples be fully assured of his resurrection.

### DIFFERENT APPEARANCES

It is also interesting to reflect upon the fact that at other times in Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances he did not assume the same likeness as he had during his earthly ministry. For example, when the disciples walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, they did not know who he was (Luke 24:13-33). Neither did he speak in the same voice he had as a man. Had he done so, the disciples would certainly have recognized him. Neither did the two disciples notice wounds in his hands as they walked with Jesus. They would certainly have found that a striking identifier. But in the form that Jesus appeared to them, he did not include the crucifixion wounds.

The ability of spirit creatures to materialize in order to communicate with men is well documented in scripture. So Jesus was using capabilities that were easily within his divine powers.

### FLESH AND BONES

There is one more clue in Jesus’ words, when he appeared to the disciples, which suggests that the body Jesus used was not his spiritual body. “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). As mentioned earlier, Jesus told them plainly that

they were not seeing a spirit being. But he adds that spirits do not have “flesh and bones.” It is further significant that Jesus did not say “flesh and blood.”

Blood in the Bible is associated with life. In Leviticus 17:11 read, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”<sup>4</sup>

Jesus’ omission of the word “blood” suggests that this body the disciples were seeing was not live flesh. Indeed the blood of Jesus Christ was given for man’s atonement. “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

When that precious blood was spilled, the man Jesus died. Jesus chose his words carefully to subtly suggest that the materialized body that the disciples saw and handled was no longer a living human, but rather a manifestation, an animated body provided to bolster their faith.

### ARK OF THE COVENANT

There is an additional lesson that can be derived from the Old Testament Tabernacle types. The Ark of the Covenant is a type of the divine family of God in future full glory. It was a vitally important part of God’s Plan from before the creation of the world. “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:20). “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him” (Ephesians 1:4).

Jehovah God was represented in the Shekinah light that shined above the Ark of the Covenant between the two cherubs. Jesus is represented in the mercy seat of pure gold upon which the blood of the typical sacrifices was sprinkled.<sup>5</sup> The church, whose head is Christ, is represented by the box of the Ark itself (1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesian 5:23).

As the Ark was moved from camp to camp, it, along with all of the other components of the entire Tabernacle structure, was packed according to detailed instructions to the Levites recorded in Numbers chapter four. While being moved, the Ark of the Covenant was to be covered with several layers of material. It was the holiest object that Israel possessed and was not to be looked upon or touched except by the authorized Priests and Levites.<sup>6</sup>

The procedure for preparing the Ark for travel is found in Numbers 4:5,6. “And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: And shall put thereon the covering of badgers’ skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof.”



*Ark of the Covenant*

The innermost covering of the Ark was the veil that normally separated the Holy of the Tabernacle from the Most Holy. As the Holy represented the spirit-begotten condition and the Most Holy represented the spirit-born condition, the veil represents the death of the flesh of those passing through, first Jesus and then all that follow closely in his footsteps. “By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:20).

The next layer that was laid over the veil was a cover of sealskin.<sup>7</sup> The aquatic animal from which the skin was taken provided a very practical waterproof covering. Black sealskin is not a particularly attractive covering. Sealskin was also used as the outer covering the Tabernacle itself.

In the Tabernacle, the sealskin represents how the unchristian world views sacrificing Christians. They see only the unsightly flesh and do not know of the beautiful things within — the gold, silver, and brodered curtains. In the case of the Ark, sealskin is not the outermost covering, as it is on the Tabernacle. The sealskin covering the Ark also represents the unattractive flesh, but it is hidden by the final covering, a sheet of blue cloth.

Thus when the Ark was on the move, all that anyone could see was this blue covering. In the Tabernacle types, blue represents faithfulness. In nature, blue is the favored result of the complex interaction (Rayleigh scattering) of the atmosphere with sunlight. This heavenly blue illustrates the faithfulness of God. “For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy **faithfulness** shalt thou establish in the very heavens” (Psalms 89:2).

The Ark was the only piece of Tabernacle furniture that did not have an outermost covering of sealskin (except the Copper Laver that had no coverings at all). This difference is important in understanding the meaning that God intended.

Putting all of the details of this type together, we see that when the church is in glory with Jesus, as shown by the Ark in the Most Holy or on the move, then mankind will recognize that the Kingdom of God is ruling the earth, and Jesus and the church are their kings (Revelation 5:10).



*Jesus appearing to Paul*

The resurrection of the church, just like the resurrection of their head Jesus, will come as a result of being faithful unto death — the death of the flesh — and the receiving of the divine nature as a gracious reward. The golden Ark represents that divine reward.

But notice carefully — the flesh of the church, represented by the sealskin, does not touch the Ark in any way. No, the second veil, representing the death of the flesh, forever separates the sealskin — the flesh of the church — from the Ark. In other words, the **flesh** does not go beyond the veil! “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom” (1 Corinthians 15:50). This relates back to the discussion of Jesus’ own resurrection. He too passed through death, leaving the flesh behind.

But what of the flesh? It has been sacrificed and is to be seen no longer. Consequently, the covering of blue forever hides the flesh from sight. What is remembered of Jesus and the church is their faithfulness — the cloth of blue. In the Kingdom, the world will remember the earthly walk of Jesus and the church.

They will remember the faithfulness and character of those overcomers. And they will know that these have gone to their reward on the divine plane to be the loving and kind rulers with King Jesus over the world of mankind. “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her” (Psalms 87:5).

— Br. David Stein

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(1) The manuscript evidence favors “died,” not “suffered.” GNT<sub>1</sub> reads “died,” though GNT<sub>4</sub> does not.

(2) See word for word translation, *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, Watchtower 1969, or *The Emphatic Diaglott*, Benjamin Wilson, 1942 edition.

(3) There is some debate about whether this verse is speaking about Jehovah or his son Jesus. Scriptures can be well mustered on both sides of the question. The author inclines to believe that it is Jesus about whom Paul is referring because if it were the Father here, it would not be strictly true that he “only” has immortality since at the time this was written, Jesus also had immortality. One could describe Jesus as the “only” one with immortality inasmuch as the Father is often excepted in such statements. See 1 Corinthians 15:27.

(4) See also Leviticus 17:14, Genesis 9:5, Deuteronomy 12:23.

(5) Romans 3:24, “whom set forth the God a mercy-seat through the faith by the of him blood, for a pointing out of the righteousness of himself, through the passing by of the formerly committed sins in the forbearance of the God” (Wilson Diaglott).

(6) Violation of the holiness of the Ark resulted in immediate judgment from God. See 1 Samuel 6:19,20, 2 Samuel 6:6-8.

(7) The word “badgers” is mistranslated in the KJV. The correct translation should be “sealskin” or “sea-cows.” See *Beauties of the Truth*, February 2010, “Tabernacle Coverings of Sea-cows.”

## Papias

We happened upon an interesting comment in Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History regarding a certain Papias. He wrote:

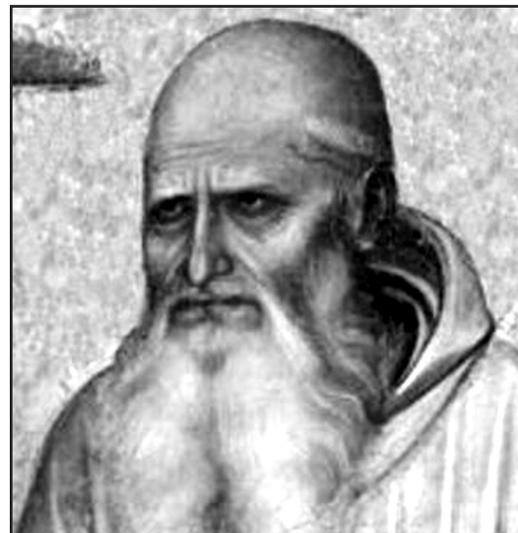
“In these he (Papias) says there would be a certain **millennium** after the resurrection, and that there would be a corporeal reign of Christ on this very earth; which things he appears to have imagined, as if they were authorized by the apostolic narration, not understanding correctly those matters which they propounded mystically in their representations. For he was very limited in his comprehension, as is evident from his discourses; yet he was the cause why most ecclesiastical writers, urging the antiquity of the man, were carried away by a similar opinion; as, for instance, Irenaeus, or any other that adopted such sentiments.”<sup>1</sup>

There are many good snippets in Christian history about this godly man, including that he was a disciple of the aged Apostle John. But it is a particular blessing to come across something dating from the early Second Century AD that confirms a doctrinal truth we have been blessed with here at the end of the Gospel Age. Namely, that Jesus’ second coming would signal the resurrection and the ushering in of a Millennial Reign on earth. It is noteworthy to observe that Eusebius, writing in the Fourth Century, attempts to discredit Papias for that opinion. It was a truth that had faded much by Eusebius’ lifetime. But note, Eusebius shows that it seemed to be the doctrinal viewpoint of **most** writers of that earlier time. We believe it was the **prevailing** view!

We thank the Lord for this little telescope back across the ages of Christian history that reaffirms this truth from the Divine Plan of the Ages!

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(1) *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, Baker Book House, 1977, Book 3, Chapter 39, page 126.



*Papias, associate of Polycarp, who was the bishop of Smyrna and disciple of the Apostle John.*

# The Color Blue

*“Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens” (Psalms 89:2).*

The color blue is a symbol of faithfulness. The very heavens cast this beautiful color into the eyes of all observers, while they reflect on the importance of their faithful law giver. “Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens” (Psalms 89:2), “To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night” (Psalms 92:2).

The word “blue” is used 50 times in the KJV and, surprisingly, every one of these occurrences is found in the Old Testament. In the book of Exodus the color blue is used symbolically and its use falls into four main categories: (1) Coverings for the furniture of the tabernacle, (2) The vestments of the high priest, (3) The curtains of the tabernacle, (4) The door, first veil and the second veil.

Blue cloth or thread was used for the lacers, crown, robe, breastplate, ephod, curious girdle, and the pomegranates.

Though blue is used as symbol in the Tabernacle, one needs to look elsewhere to elucidate its meaning. Respecting Israel and their arrangements, Paul said, “All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [ages] are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). The word translated “ensamples” means example, and also means figure, pattern, or type. Therefore it is reasonable to look for spiritual meaning in specifics such as the colors used in the Tabernacle.

## IDENTIFIED BY SOURCE

Colors in the Old Testament are identified more with the source of the color than today. By examining the qualities of the sources of the color for the ancients we are more likely to gain an understanding of the meaning and symbolism of the color.

The word Hebrew translated “blue” is related to the name of the shell fish from which the blue dye was extracted. The shellfish had to die in order for the blue dye to be extracted. It seems that all of the major colors in the tabernacle required the death of an animal in order to secure the dye produced by them. This reminds us of Hebrews 9:22, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” This suggests that the qualities symbolized by the various colors are exhibited in the sacrifice and suffering of Christ.

The most ubiquitous source of the color blue was the heavens. The daytime heavens in the Middle East are particularly rich in blue. This requires the presence of the light of the sun. Specifically, the blue color occurs because the blue wavelengths contained in the white light



*The blue sky is a colorful reminder of God's faithfulness.*

of the sun are preferentially scattered off the molecules contained in our atmosphere, which we then see on earth. Thus blue is produced as a favorable reaction from the presence of the sun. So too the most favorable reaction a saint of God can give to the light and presence of the truth is faithfulness.

The heavens are unchanging. In this they are an appropriate symbol for the reliable, unchanging faithfulness of God, who expresses mercy, kindness, and love, toward humanity. “I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness wilt thou establish in the very heavens. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Jehovah; Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones” (Psalms 89:2,5, ASV).

In the same psalm, verses 3 and 4 tell us of the “sure mercies of David.” These sure mercies refer to God's unalterable promise that David's royal lineage and his throne will be established forever. This will be fulfilled antotypically when Christ and his church class reign in the long-awaited kingdom of God.

The opportunity to sit on David's throne with Jesus is expressed in Revelation 3:21, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” There is a condition — overcoming — but if this condition is met by us, God is unalterably committed to providing the blessing promised. This unalterable commitment is expressed in the psalm by referring to the heavens as testimony of the sureness and fixity of God's purposes.

Psalms 89 also connects the surety of God's promises to the durability and regularity of the heavens. “His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah” (Psalms 89:29, 35-37).

God also uses the permanence of the firmament to express the firmness of his promise to Israel. “Thus saith Jehovah, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever” (Jeremiah 31:35, 36).

Our faith is also important. Faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 6:1). It is vital for us to express faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please him ... he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Our faith is intimately related to God’s faithfulness — for our faith is in Him, His purposes, the stability of His character, and His fidelity to His promises.

When we look up at the heavens we see not only an evidence of His glory and creative power, but also His faithfulness. This has relevance to the present time. We now see the signs of the presence of the son of man. Therefore we can lift up our heads, knowing that our deliverance draweth nigh (Luke 21:28). When we lift up our heads we can see the blue heavens and are always reminded that he is faithful and that his promises are sure.

## SAPPIR

Another important source of the color blue for the ancients was what the Hebrew text calls *sappir*. It is translated *sappherios* in the Septuagint and sapphire or sapphire stone in the KJV.

In ancient times lapis lazuli was known as sapphire, which is the name that is used today for the blue corundum variety of sapphire. Lapis lazuli is a deep blue stone with golden flecks of iron pyrites. “The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold” (Job 28:6). (The more modern sapphire, blue corundum, was scarcely known to the ancients.)

The ancient sapphire’s “dust of gold” identifies this as lapis lazuli, a gem quality stone and therefore precious. Importantly, it is transparent, else the flecks of iron pyrite would be difficult to see. This is similar to the sky. Towards the evening the heavenly bodies can be seen because of this transparency of the atmosphere. Lapis lazuli evokes images of the azure night sky bedecked with stars.

Lapis lazuli — precious, transparent, blue, with gold flecks — was one of stones used for the breastplate of judgment worn by the high priest. Each one of the stones had the name of one of the 12 tribes inscribed on it. Presently God is making up his Jewels. “They shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels” (Malachi 3:17).

Revelation 7 says that the 144,000 are selected from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Romans 9:6-8 says that



*Lapis Lazuli, ancient sapphire, transparent blue with gold flecks.*

not all Israelites are of the Israel of God. The promised seed of blessing will be those who demonstrate faith, as did Abraham. Therefore the jewels of the breastplate nicely picture spiritual Israel. Apparently all the jewels were made from common earth elements. This well pictures the selection of the church from ordinary mankind. Not many wise, mighty, or noble of this world have been called (1 Corinthians 1:26).

The underlying color of lapis lazuli is blue, symbolizing faithfulness. Faithfulness is a basic characteristic of all that seek to become part of the seed of blessing. The jewels represent qualities of Christian character that we need to have developed. A property of all the jewels in the High Priest’s breastplate was that they needed to be polished and cut to fit into their golden sockets (indicative of the new spiritual nature). This polishing and cutting occurs by an external agent. This would represent the guiding hand of God, shaping our characters according to the experiences He allows to befall us.

The breastplate of 12 jewels, spiritual Israel of 12 tribes, and the 12 apostles who sit on 12 thrones (Matthew 19:28), all relate to the various Christ-like qualities that are required of members of the body of Christ. The different qualities of the jewels, different characteristics of the 12 sons of Israel, and different characteristics of the Apostles, gives us an insight into these requisite qualities.

## TRANSPARENCY

The transparency of lapis lazuli is an important feature of its beauty. Likewise, the transparency of Christ’s character is a vital quality. Jesus “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22), and we who follow him are to develop similarly transparent characters. “Even hereunto were ye called ... that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:22).

Revelation 14:4,5 speaks of the pure characters of the Church. “These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

Purity and transparency of character is also shown by the transparent nature of many, if not all, of the other 11 breastplate stones.



Artist conception (relative dimensions are not natural)

The transparency of the blue sky is important to seeing the various heavenly bodies — and the purity of the disciples of Christ is important in allowing others to see precious things as well. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

The light of God can be reflected and refracted by the Christian character of its representatives, to provide beauty for all who see it.

God used the permanence of the firmament to represent the surety of his promises to David and to Israel. God emphasized His faithfulness when He established those promises. These promises are covenant obligations, even if they be unilateral, or one sided promises, such as was the Abrahamic covenant. The association of the firmament with ancient sapphire or lapis lazuli opens up other pictures involved with making and carrying out God's covenants.

Exodus 24:9,10, recounts an episode from the giving of the Law Covenant. “Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.”

Here God makes clear his faithfulness in keeping His part of the agreement. The vision of God standing on a pavement of lapis lazuli would have created the appropriate picture for them.

God not only wanted to impress upon them His faithfulness in keeping His side of the agreement, but that His intentions and motives were transparent. There was no hidden agenda on His part and therefore no deceit. In any agreement, transparency and honesty of intent is of paramount importance for the other part to rely upon it.

## NEW JERUSALEM

Another picture involves Zion, New Jerusalem, which represents the Gospel Church in glory and kingdom power, spiritual and invisible to men. “Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

Romans 11:25,26 says, “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” When the church is complete, then natural Israel who had previously been hardened, will be saved.

How appropriate that one of the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem shall be lapis lazuli. “The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald” (Revelation 21:19).

The faithfulness of the gospel church will then have been amply demonstrated. They would have walked the path of faith and been found faithful. The world of mankind will therefore have great confidence in this spiritual governing group.

## BLUE CLOTH

From all of this, it becomes easier to see how fitting the use of blue as a symbol of faithfulness is in the typical tabernacle. Some items of furniture in the tabernacle were covered directly with seal skins, but not the brazen altar, table of shew bread, laver, or the ark of the covenant. The ark was first covered with the purple veil, then seal skins, and finally with a cloth of blue. Thus the external appearance of the ark was the blue covering, rather than the seal skins.

The ark represents Jesus and his Church, partakers of the divine nature, having passed beyond the veil into the heavenlies. Seal skins aptly symbolize the fleshly nature. How well, then, does the blue cloth that covers the seal skins show the victory of faith over the flesh. Also, though the world of mankind shall never again see the flesh of the saints, they will recognize the faithfulness of the saints (Psalms 87:5,6).

The Brazen altar was covered with purple, then seal skins, to show royal hopes of the church in the flesh. The table of shew bread was covered with a cloth of blue, then red or scarlet, then seal skins, and represents those who have been faithful (blue) unto death (red) during the time of their flesh (seal skins). They will be ultimately exalted. Such faithfulness unto death is not appreciated by the world, as they only see the seal skins covering our humanity (Numbers 4:5-15).

The laver was never covered. It represents God's word — the truth — especially as this is centered in Jesus Christ. Israelites looking into this copper vessel by reason of highly polished surface would have seen therein a reflection of their own image, as contrasted with the perfections of Jesus Christ while he served in his perfect flesh (the polished copper). Thus the world may see their own imperfections and the need for cleansing. Thus we have a reason why this vessel, unlike the rest of the tabernacle furniture remained uncovered.

### BLUE FRINGES

In Numbers 15:37-38, the children of Israel were instructed to wear blue fringes in the borders of their garments, “So that you may remember, and do all My commandments, and be holy to your God. I am Jehovah your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am Jehovah your God” (Numbers 15: 40, 41).

### SUMMARY

The color blue is used in the scriptures as a powerful symbol of faithfulness. We glean an understanding of its meaning through its associated sources in the ancient world. It is extensively used in the symbolism of the tabernacle, and also respecting God's promises and covenants, to remind us that He is faithful to carry them out. When we look at the heavens we see the creative glory of God, but also a symbol that all his promises are true.

Let us therefore, with renewed vigor, lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily besets us, run with patience the race before us, and press onwards to the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:1).

— Br. Adam Kopiczyk

## The Oldest Text

What would you say is the oldest archeological find of a scripture text?

In 1979, Hungarian born Israeli archeologist Gabriel Barkay, along with a group of 12 and 13 year olds, was excavating in an area outside of Jerusalem in the backyard of St. Andrews Church, an area known as Ketef Hinnom. One of the boys, wielding a hammer under a burial bench, unexpectedly broke through to a secret chamber containing more than 1000 objects.

Among them were two tiny, rolled-up amulet silver scrolls, about 1 inch long that research dated to the late seventh and early sixth centuries BC. All objects of this antiquity must be handled with delicate care, as they are extremely fragile. The development of an unrolling process took three years. But the payoff was supremely exciting.<sup>1</sup>



One of the two Silver Scrolls

Amulet I reads: “... YHWH ... the grea[t ... who keeps] the covenant and [g]raciousness toward those who love [Him] and those who keep [His commandments ...]. The Eternal? [...]. [the?] blessing more than any [sna]re and more than evil. For redemption is in Him. For YHWH is our restorer [and] rock. May YHWH bles[s] you and keep you. [May] YHWH make [His face] shine.”

Amulet II reads: “[First line almost completely illegible.] May h[e]/sh[e] be blessed by Yahweh, the warrior [or “helper”] and the rebuker of [e]vil: May Yahweh bless you, keep you. May Yahweh make His face shine upon you and grant you p[ea]ce.”<sup>2</sup>

It is of great interest that both amulets were inscribed with the same blessing “May Yahweh bless you and keep you; may Yahweh cause His face to shine upon you and grant you peace.”

Bible students will recognize this as part of the priestly benediction in Numbers 6:24-26. The American Standard Version (1901) reads:

“(24) Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee: (25) Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: (26) Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

This find makes these texts the oldest copy of any part of the Hebrews scriptures. It is also a stunning rebuttal to liberal scholars who maintain that the Pentateuch was not written until after the exile in Babylon.

On an emotional side, it tickles the imagination to realize that some ancient worshipper at Solomon’s Temple held this amulet as part of their holy worship!

(1) Amulet picture source: [theosophical.wordpress.com/2011/08/23/biblical-archaeology-22-silver-amulet-scrolls-of-ketef-hinnom/](http://theosophical.wordpress.com/2011/08/23/biblical-archaeology-22-silver-amulet-scrolls-of-ketef-hinnom/)

(2) See [www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/01/06/The-Blessing-of-the-Silver-Scrolls.aspx](http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/01/06/The-Blessing-of-the-Silver-Scrolls.aspx).

“The Truth of Jehovah  
endureth for ever”

(Psalms 117:2)