



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 137

The Fire of God

AND THE SECOND DEATH

by – J. Preston Eby

THE PURPOSE OF DIVINE FIRE

The basic purpose of the divine fire of God is to cleanse, purify, purge, temper and change. It is to rid of impurities, of filth, of undesirable elements. There is no better way to deal with filth than to deal with it by fire. The divine fire will burn up all the governments, institutions, systems and fruitage of the carnal mind. It will melt all the customs, cultures, traditions and practices of society and make of this earth a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Every man's work will eventually be tested in this fire. The fire will try every man's work of what sort it is. If you and I build into our walls wood, hay, and stubble, that fire will find it out, and the walls will come tumbling down.

When God turns on the heat, the blazing light of His Spirit and Word – some things begin to change! The fire is never sent to destroy the *person*, but to purge out all that hinders and separates him from his God, to consume the pride, arrogance, hostility, defiance and rebellion of the flesh, the carnal mind.

More than three centuries ago when the Black Plague swept through London, England, more than 68,000 men, women and children were sickened with the putrid fever, suffered nameless agonies, passed into delirium, sometimes with convulsions, and then died. Before the end of the terrible nightmare of anguish and death, what was thought to be an even greater tragedy occurred. The city caught fire, the whole heavens were ablaze as the Great Fire destroyed more than 13,200 homes and 89 churches. Most of the city, which was built largely of wood, lay in ashes. Wonder of wonders! As soon as the last dying embers cooled and the smoke cleared, the inhabitants of the city discovered that the Plague had been stayed! Not another person died of the epidemic. The Plague

never returned. The fire had killed the bacteria-carrying fleas and rats that caused the Plague. It took a fire to do it!

Make no mistake! *“Our God is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:29).

THE SECOND DEATH

The book of Revelation is a book of symbols. In the introduction to this marvelous book the beloved John explains,

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John” (Revelation 1:1).

The word “signified” is from the Greek “*semaino*” meaning to indicate or communicate by means of signs and symbols. The meanings of all the symbols of the Revelation are given, either in the book itself, or elsewhere in the Scriptures. He tells us exactly what certain things are. In Revelation 20:14 God tells us exactly what the Second Death is.

“And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH.”

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Now What? After Believing in the Reconciliation of All, What Should One Do Then?

by – George F. Howe

What should believers in the ultimate reconciliation of all do once they have trusted this Bible truth? They should realize that it was God who gave them the faith to accept it as a divine gift, a blessing, and a privilege. God gave it to us not because we were smarter or more spiritual than the majority of other Christians. In all humility remember that the glory goes to God, Who is the Savior of all (I Timothy 4:9-11).

Please use this knowledge to help build and unite the ecclesia, not to break it down or fragment it further. Since we understand that God loves and saves all people, let us love all people too, especially believers.

Be ready to explain Bible passages to people who show interest but do not push reconciliation teachings on ones who hesitate or reject. God's acceptance of people does not depend on their correct understanding of His plans.

Christians should be viewed in a favorable light, whether they agree or disagree and every "lost" person should be seen as a candidate for salvation and/or at least as one with whom we will be united when God becomes "All in all" at the consummation described in I Corinthians 15:28. We will show more love, patience, and respect for all people, in keeping with Galatians 6:10.

Some who believe in the ultimate reconciliation of all are able to share with others, but for one reason or another, others are not in a position to discuss the issue with very many people. Those who must accept and enjoy this understanding in relative silence can identify with Mary, who for years simply "... pondered many things in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Realize that many who reject the ultimate reconciliation of all may fare quite favorably otherwise at the bema judgment seat for having served God faithfully in many other areas. Likewise, some who balk now may adopt and promote the truth later in their lives.



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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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Now let me make this a little plainer. Definitions of men can be given backward. For instance, the definition, "An island is a tract of land completely surrounded by water," can be given thus: "A tract of land completely surrounded by water is an island." This is but another way of stating the same fact. It does not, in any way, change the meaning.

Now let us try this on the definition of the Second Death. The Bible states it thus:

*"Death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire.
THIS IS the Second Death."*

Now let us turn this around for clarity.

*"The Second Death IS death and hell cast into
the Lake of Fire."*

Therefore we have exactly the same meaning either way it is stated. What is the Second Death? It is the first death and hell cast into the Lake of Fire! This fact is very important. The Second Death is not merely the Lake of Fire. The Second Death is not men being tortured for ever in the Lake of Fire. God has made it very simple and plain. The Second Death is the first death and hell "cast into the Lake of Fire." That is God's definition.

Can we now open the eyes of our understanding to see that everything cast into the Lake of Fire pertains to *death*? Death itself is cast into the Lake of Fire. Hell, the realm of the dead, is cast into the Lake of Fire. And those whose names are not written in the Book of Life, those who are dead, in trespasses and in sins, who inhabit hell, are cast into the Lake of Fire. That is the end of death and hell and sin, for God shall destroy death in the Lake of Fire, He shall burn up hell in the Lake of Fire, and He shall consume sin and rebellion in the Lake of Fire.

THE DEATH OF DEATHS

How I long to see the end of sin and death and hell! The time is coming, praise His name, when God shall be "All in all," and there shall be neither sin, nor sinners, nor death, nor hell. It is clear that God does not destroy men in the Lake of Fire, nowhere does it say that, for that would be a contradiction of terms. How can you destroy death by creating death? How can you abolish death by bringing men under the power of eternal death from which there is no escape? Oh, no, it is not men who are destroyed in

the Lake of Fire – it is sin and death and hell that are destroyed.

"And the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians 15:26).

Thus, "the Lake of Fire" is nothing more nor less than the death of deaths!

The following words by Ray Prinzing give fresh insight into this wonderful truth:

The question arises, "Is the Second Death the same kind of death as the first?" Many people think that it is a repetition of the first, and that the results are the same, while its action is more severe and cruel, and destructive, being by fire. And some Christians add very sorrowfully, "and from this Second Death there is no resurrection, it is an endless torment in agony," BUT NOT SO! For God's seconds are never duplicates of the first, they are always better, higher, and more powerful than the firsts, and used to counter-balance all the action of the firsts, and MUCH MORE – He always saves the best until last.

All Bible statements prove that the two deaths are absolutely *unlike*, and that the two are opposite and antagonistic. The Second Death undoes all the work of the first death in the same manner that the last Adam undid all the work of the first Adam. Not to nullify the purpose being wrought out by the plan of God in the firsts, but to bring a release from the firsts in a MUCH MORE manner of majesty and glory and power and scope of coverage, into the greater and glorious things of God.

Creation was made subject to vanity for a purpose! Sin was allowed for wise ends, but when those ends have been secured it will have to cease to exist. The purpose is not nullified, but the means whereby the purpose has been executed shall be done away. Discipline is a means to an end, but not an end in itself, for,

"afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11).

The first Adam died to God and righteousness, and became alive unto sin. The last Adam died unto sin (Romans 6:10), and lives unto God, and so fulfills all righteousness. The first made all men sinners, the last makes all men righteous. The lives and the deaths of the two Adams are thus greatly contrasting the one to the other. The First Death was a transition

from life to death, the Second Death is a transition from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality – transformed from the carnal mind to the spiritual mind, which is life and peace, which transformation is wrought by a dying out to the one realm, to come alive to the higher realm. The Second Death is prepared to purge out and burn away sin and its results, and so doing cleanse God's entire universe.

Death came as an enemy, the fruitage of an act of disobedience that turned man away from God and into the realm of carnality, minding self and flesh. Now God makes death overcome itself. It is by death that death is rendered powerless, and there arises an up-springing, a new life. It takes death to destroy death, and thus Christ did,

“taste death for every man ... that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:9, 14-15).

NO MORE DEATH

At last shall be fulfilled the beautiful promise:

*“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be **no more death**, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, **I make all things new**. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful”* (Revelation 21:3-5).

Whatever we hold as the nature of the death state, may we let this truth sink deep into our hearts: **death is to be abolished**. The ringing declaration, *“The **last** enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* (I Corinthians 15:26), overthrows the whole structure of accepted, but unproved theology which shuts up the mass of the human race in “eternal death.” When the “last” enemy is abolished it is self-evident that none remains. Those wretched religionists who demand the endlessness of death, who argue for eternal torment in the Lake of Fire, the Second Death, do err, not

knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. The Lake of Fire **MUST** end because death and hell are cast into it, which is the Second Death, and in the end,

“there shall be N-O M-O-R-E D-E-A-T-H.”

No more death! No more first death. No more Second Death. No more of any kind of death. To say there is no more death is to say that there are no more sinners, for sinners are DEAD MEN, dead in trespasses and in sins. To say there is no more death is to say that God has not “burned up” all the wicked and left them dead, or in hell, for as long as any creature of God is in a state of death, death is not abolished. To say there is no more death is to say there is no more hell, for hell is “the realm of the dead.” To say there is no more death is to say there is no more a Lake of Fire, for the Lake of Fire **IS** the Second Death. To say there is no more death is to say there is no more sin, for *“the wages of sin is DEATH.”*

What a universe of truth is contained in three little words: NO MORE DEATH! This grand truth seems to be almost unknown in the Church systems. Although the very climax and fulfillment of all revelation, it has been eclipsed by human perversions. As a result the “God” of the popular Churches has lost the essential attributes of Deity. He is like the foolish man who started to build but could not finish. Man's theology brings nothing to a conclusion. It attains no definite goal. Sin, suffering, and disobedience are never conquered. Death is never destroyed. Redemption is never fully secured. God is compelled to work an eternal miracle in order to maintain a never-ending eyesore in His creation, once so subject, so sinless, and so good. He has to eternally keep His great foot on the lid of hell; for if even one of the devils should get out there would be hell everywhere!

But death in all its forms shall be destroyed until it shall be said, *“There is no more death!”* Jesus is Conqueror! Then shall every creature in the universe bow and in glad chorus sing,

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

(A small abridgement taken from J. Preston Eby's, *The Savior of the World* series)

Leading Captivity Captive

by – Ivan Burgener

This phrase is found but one time in the New Testament, in Ephesians 4:9 where the Apostle Paul quoted Psalm 68:18. In the Old Testament it appears twice, Psalm 68:18 and Judges 5:12. Let us consider first Ephesians 4.

*“But unto every one of us is **given grace** according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He says, When He ascended up on high, He led **captivity captive**, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) And **He gave** some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine ...”* (Ephesians 4:7-14).

According to Judges 4:2 *“the LORD sold them [Israel] into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan”* and God was at that time bringing Israel out of this captivity through the judges Deborah and Barak.

“Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying ...” (Judges 5:1).

*“Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy **captivity captive**, thou son of Abinoam”* (Judges 5:12).

The people of Israel were prisoners and God

would lead their “*captivity captive*,” that is, He would set them free.

*“**Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them”** (Psalms 68:18).*

In expounding and interpreting our passage in Ephesians 4, many expositors seem to ignore the passage quoted from Psalm 68 and its setting. As a result they miss the point Paul was making in Ephesians. Let us begin with Psalm 68.

David began his psalm asking God to arise, that is, to come to the defense of His people, *“Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.”* He continued, *“let the wicked perish at the presence of God”* (68:2), and on the good side, *“... let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice”* (68:3). David rejoiced that God would be a father to the orphan and a defender of the widow. In God’s deliverance *“He brings out those which are bound with chains ...”* (68:6). What is this but setting the captives free?

Then David recalled Israel under Moses’ leadership when *“The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: **even Sinai itself** was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel ...”* (Psalms 68:8). He thought back to God’s glorious deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. He remembered many of the mighty acts of God in His championing the cause of the nation as He brought them to Sinai,

*“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in **Sinai**, in the holy place. **Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received***

gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation ...” (68:17-19).

In this Psalm who was it that ascended on high? Was it not Moses in his trips up and down Mt. Sinai? Moses ascended up the mount and met God there only to receive from Him the gift/revelation of His sacred law. What did Moses do but descend back down the Mount and give these gifts to Israel! It is this very passage that Paul quoted, not as a fulfillment of prophecy, but as a parallel situation of God delivering captives from their captivity, setting them free, and then giving them gifts through His very presence on Sinai.

Paul made application in Ephesians only after first giving the seven-fold unity of the Spirit,

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is **one body, and one Spirit**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling; **One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Our question to Paul is: Where are we to turn for help to keep this unity of the Spirit? We need help, to say the least! To meet that need, our risen Lord has “**given grace** ...” Paul continued,

“But **unto every one of us is given grace** according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He says, when He ascended up on high, He led **captivity captive**, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) And **He gave** ...” (Ephesians 4:7-11).

This whole passage explains the gifts of grace given to gifted men in the church for the growth and maturity of the body of Christ.

First the Lord had to “lead **captivity captive** ...” It should be clear from the passage in Psalm 68 where David referred to Moses at Mt. Sinai that this phrase means, in modern English, that He set the prisoners free. Who were the freed prisoners in Moses’ day? Israel, of course, for they were newly freed from the bondage and slavery of Egypt. Who are the freed prisoners in Paul’s day? These are saints newly freed from the bondage of sin, Satan, and the law. These are redeemed members of the body of Christ.

Therefore upon Christ’s ascension to heaven (analogous to Moses ascending Mt. Sinai) Christ also “received gifts for men.” Like Moses our risen glorified Lord, having received these gifts from the Father, proceeded to give “some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry ...”

Just as Moses’ trips began at the foot of Mt. Sinai, even so the Lord Jesus came to this earth, “the lower parts of the earth,” right where He lived and died. These lower parts, the earth, are contrasted with the upper parts, heaven. Based on His death, He freed us, the prisoners. Then ascended in heaven He gave gifts for the edifying of the body of Christ, building it up to maturity.

As to the expression the “**lower parts of the earth**,” it should be clear that as Moses came down from Mt. Sinai to its base – that is, where Israel was encamped: it was where they lived and died – so for the Lord,

“What is it but that He [Christ] also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? [for His life in ministry and His death and burial in sacrifice to free us, the prisoners] He that descended [to the earth and then the grave] is the same also that ascended up [out of death into resurrected life] to fill all things ...”

Hence of His fullness have we received. “He ascended up on high ... far above all heavens, that he might fill all things ...”

Two other passages speak of the “*lower parts of the earth.*”

Psalms 63:6 reads,

*“When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul follows hard [I follow close] after Thee: Thy right hand upholds me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into **the lower parts of the earth.** They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped”* (Psalm 63:6-11).

In this passage the lower parts of the earth clearly refer to **the grave.**

Isaiah 44:21-23 reads,

*“Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art My servant: I have formed thee; thou art My servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye **lower parts of the earth:** break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.”*

These lower parts are simply the earth with mountains and trees.

(continued from page 1424)

The apostle is telling us that God was not only in Christ acting, but that He was reconciling you and men in this act. In Jesus, God was doing something *to me, to you, to the world.*

An old hymn poses the question, “Were you there when they crucified the Lord?” and Paul answers with a resounding “Yes!” He sees that this one act has cosmic significance. He sees our identification, or connection,

You will notice that there is no mention of the Lord visiting the underworld of imprisoned demons, fallen angels, or doing any such weird things during His supposed disembodied condition between His death and resurrection. What did the Lord do between His death and resurrection? Absolutely nothing!

According to Romans 6:9-10 death had “*dominion over Him ...*” What can that mean? It means that He was dead. Dead people do nothing. Christ did absolutely nothing between His death and resurrection.

The four Gospels conclude with scenes of the risen Lord. Their great testimony was, not one thing that He did while dead, but only what He did in resurrected life! This was the cause for rejoicing. This is something we are supposed to know and understand,

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more [no longer has] dominion over Him” (Romans 6:9).

That is the simple issue: Was Christ really dead? Did death have dominion over Him while He was dead? What is the only thing the Bible teaches that broke death’s dominion over Him? Resurrection!

“For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God” (Romans 6:10), and we live in Him, we are quickened with Him, risen with Him, ascended with Him, seated with Him. Everything we have is in our risen glorified head of the church, which is His body.



with Jesus Christ – or rather, His identification and connection with us. He sees Jesus’ headship and Lordship over us. He sees that you and I were bound up with Christ and what happened to Him. He sees that God dealt with us in Jesus. We were decidedly implicated in this one act of God.

God Is For Us
Pages 47-49, 53-55

Vicarious Humanity of Christ

by – C. Baxter Kruger

Every Sunday-school child knows that Jesus died for us. He died a substitutionary death. He suffered in our place. But the point of speaking of the *vicarious humanity of Christ* is to say Christ took our place, not only to take away our guilt on the cross, which He certainly did, but to be the substitute of our entire human existence.

This sounds rather frightening at first. But it does not mean that He came to replace us. It means He came to exchange humanities with us. He came to exchange what *He is* and has with what *we are* and have. He came to take away our alienated humanity and give us real humanity. He came to exchange our broken existence with His existence, at-one and face-to-face with His Father.

The difference between speaking of the vicarious *death* of Christ and the vicarious *humanity* of Christ is the difference between saying that *Jesus dies* in our place and that *Jesus is* in our place. The one sees His righteousness exchanged for our guilt. The other sees our fallen human existence exchanged with Jesus' human existence with His Father. What is substituted is not merely His righteousness for our sin, but His entire existence for ours. His is a vicarious humanity in which we are given a new human existence with His Father.

It is the vicarious nature of Christ's existence that lurks as the fundamental assumption behind what the apostle Paul is saying in Romans 5, II Corinthians 5, Ephesians 1-2, and Colossians 1-2. He says, for example, that

"the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (II Corinthians 5:14).

"For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:9-10).

Our identity, who we are, is wrapped up in that Man's identity. Our true humanity is there in His humanity. Our true existence is there woven into that Man's

existence. The truth about you and me and, indeed, the world is there in Jesus Christ ...

The gospel is not the news of what God has done *through* Jesus, but of what God has done *in* and as Jesus Christ. It is the good news of the Son of God's human existence which he has forged in utter at-oneness with the Father ...

It is one thing to see the Son of God as Man, now, with His Father. It is another to see that you and I and the world are bound up with Him. Here we are standing before the awesome fact of Jesus as the vicarious Man, and this fact makes the gospel truly *good* news to us ...

The Apostle Paul sees that Jesus Christ is not light-weight in the whole scheme of things. He sees that while Jesus is an individual, and while He alone died and rose again, nevertheless, this was the act of God dealing with all of us. In Paul's own words,

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (II Corinthians 5:19).

"Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 5:18).

We need to think carefully about this, for life rides on it. It is one thing to say that God has done something in Jesus which can be our reconciliation. It is quite another, to say that God reconciled us in Christ.

The first statement leaves us outside of the events of Jesus' life. The second implicates us in Him and what happened to Him. The former says God did something *for us* in Jesus. The latter says that God did something *with us* in Jesus.

The one presupposes a disconnection between Jesus and us: He is over there, we are over here. The other assumes a decisive connection: He is there and I am bound up with Him. I am implicated in what became of Him.

(continued on page 1423)