

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF A DEFINITION

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On Reprint page 5959, in the first paragraph of the article JUSTIFICATION—WHAT? WHEN? HOW? we find a definition—“Justification really means only one thing, viz.: a making right, making just.” And as forming a part of this definition, the following words are added—“Justification may be either partial or complete.”

In this “brief examination of a definition” we wish to call special attention to the fact that this definition has two parts and that if we are to use it with understanding, we must show that both parts have been given weight. Combining the two parts then, the definition reads as follows: “Justification really means only one thing, viz.: a making right, making just,” AND “a making right, making just may be either partial or complete.”

If we do not count the justification of the world in the Millennial Age, there are four justifications (“a making right, a making just”) that we have studied about in the Harvest Message. Two of these are “partial,” one is “typical” and the fourth is “complete.” The two partial justifications are “partial” because they do not have imputed to them the merit of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. The “typical” justification is “typical” because it is based upon the blood of animal sacrifices and not upon the blood of Jesus. The “complete” justification is “complete” because it has the life element in it, viz., the imputation of the merit of Jesus’ sacrifice.

For the sake of convenience and clarity, we are going to call the justifications referred to above as justifications number one, number two, number three and number four.

Justification number one (“a making right, making just”) was granted to the Ancient Worthies. Abraham was an outstanding example of the Ancient Worthies, so we refer to the Scriptures which describe his condition and position. Rom. 4:1-3, “Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” And James adds his testimony (James 2:23), “And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: AND HE WAS CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD.” Because Jesus had not yet died, it was not possible to impute the merit of Jesus’ sacrifice to Abraham, and hence his justification was “partial.” Abraham’s justification was as complete as it was possible to make it under the circumstances. Thus by way of explanation he was spoken of as “tentatively justified.” “Tentative” means that “which is not yet permanent, but may become so.” Abraham will be completely justified in the “better resurrection.”

Justification number two (“a making right, making just”) was granted to the nation of Israel and was based upon the offering of the blood of animals once a year on the Atonement Day. The blood of animals was typical and foreshadowed the death of Jesus

as the ransom sacrifice for the redemption of Adam and his race. This justification granted to the nation of Israel was “typical” only, and might be spoken of as the lowest form of justification, for “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” Heb. 10:4.

Justification number three (“a making right, making just”) is granted to those who approach God during the Gospel Age. It is accomplished in much the same manner as the justification granted to Abraham, viz., by the exercise of faith and in drawing near to God. This accomplishes a “friendship relationship” with Christ and with God. We note the words of Jesus just before his crucifixion, words which were addressed to his disciples—“let not your heart be troubled: ye BELIEVE IN GOD, believe also in me.” (John 14:1) And in the following chapter of John, verses 14 and 15 Jesus said “ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” This language conveys the same thought as the language employed to describe Abraham’s faith and his friendship relationship with God. Justification number three, like Abraham’s is “partial” because the blood of Jesus is not imputed. It is also “tentative” but may become complete by a certain process described in the following paragraph.

Justification number four (“a making right, making just”) is a justification “unto life” and “is an instantaneous work—it is God that justifieth.” (Reprint 5959, paragraph 5). It is brought about as follows: one who is approaching God, enjoys a justification to friendship with God and with Christ. Such, if he is to continue to receive God’s guidance and favor, is expected to continue to draw nearer and nearer to God and “count the cost.” When the “cost is counted” and the individual goes all the way and makes a full consecration to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, he is sponsored by Jesus, is accepted of God and spirit begotten and at the same time the merit of Jesus’ sacrifice is imputed to the offering of the body of the consecrating one, and the result is “justification unto life.” The justification to friendship of the one offering himself in full consecration is “vitalized,” i.e., it has imputed to it the “merit of Jesus,” and the instantaneous result is “justification to life.” This justification is the highest form “a making right, making just” because it is complete.

It is being said that “you are either justified or you are not.” This expression is true if it is applied properly. If this expression is limited in its meaning to “justification to life,” then it is not a proper expression to use because there are four different phases or aspects to “a making right, making just,” as explained in the foregoing paragraphs. We believe it is possible to use this expression properly as follows: the Ancient Worthies were justified to friendship with God, but their worldly neighbors were not. The nation of Israel was typically justified but the surrounding worldly nations were not. Those approaching God in the Gospel Age are justified to friendship with God and with Christ, but their worldly associates are not. Those who go all the way during the Gospel Age, having the merit of

Jesus imputed to their sacrifice are justified to life, but those who are merely approaching God are not (justified to life).

As an illustration of the application of the definition of justification to all four forms of “making right, making just”, we think of four different makes of automobiles—a Chevrolet, a Volkswagen, a Ford, and finally a Cadillac with a royal seal added. All four are defined as automobiles, and each one has its usefulness, but only the Cadillac has the distinction of being far superior to the other three automobiles, with the added feature of the royal seal, indicating that the occupant of the Cadillac belongs to the royal line.

We had an illustration of this last feature—of the royal seal—when we were riding in a car with an officer of the U.S. Navy. As we approached the entrance to a Navy installation, the sailor on guard duty noted the sign on the front of the car indicating that an officer of the Navy was driving the car, and he immediately gave a snappy salute. To the sailor on guard duty this was a special car and must be given recognition not accorded to other cars.

(The Chevrolet would represent the justification of the Ancient Worthies. The Volkswagen would represent the justification of the nation of Israel. The Ford would represent the justification of those approaching God in the Gospel Age. And finally the Cadillac with the royal seal would represent the justification of those who are the sons of God during the Gospel Age—the “king’s own.”)

We hope this “brief examination of a definition” will assist in understanding the subject of Justification better—“a making right, making just, which may be either partial or complete.”