

*Important Chronology note on page 10*



Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

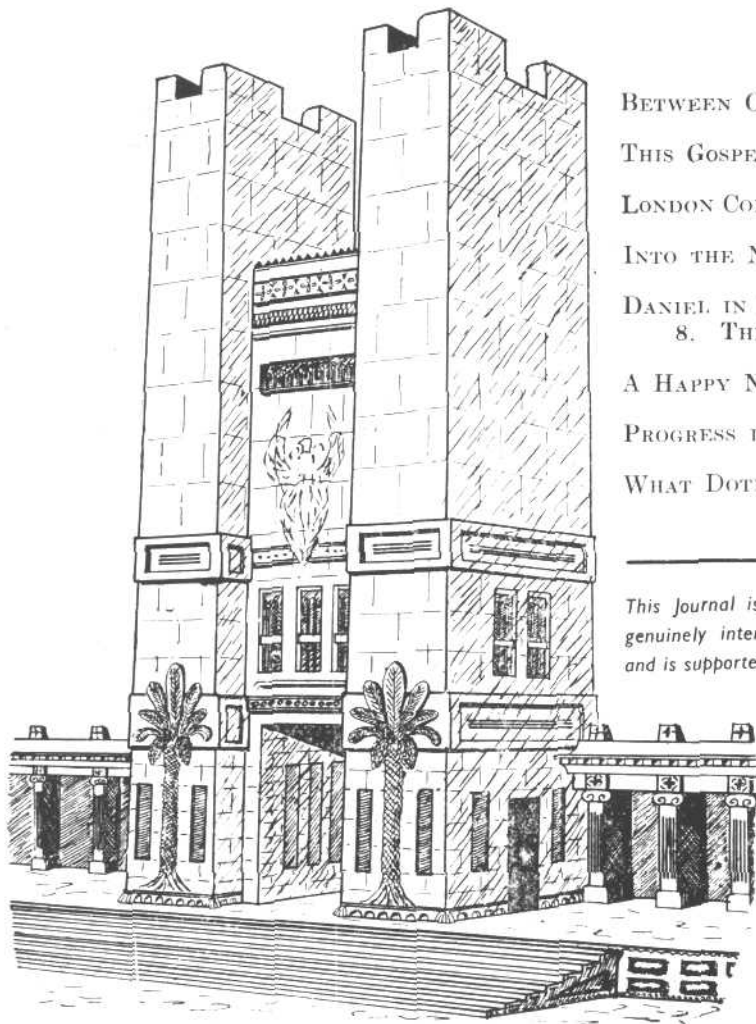
# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

# Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

## BETWEEN OURSELVES

"*Israel has a destiny*" is the title of a very well-produced little booklet of sixteen pages, with eight half-tone plates and two diagrams, on good art paper, which has been published by some of our brethren as one means of calling attention to the significance of present developments in Israel. The booklet is well adapted for passing to anyone interested in this feature of the Divine outworking. The letterpress is not extensive but it is well chosen and mentions a few important facts and relates them to Scriptural prophecy; there are two pages of Biblical references to Israel's destiny. The booklet can be obtained for 6d. per copy or 5/- per dozen post free from Associated Bible Students, 3 Ingram Close, Stanmore, Middlesex. Class secretaries who have not seen it may have a complimentary copy free of charge upon application to the Jewish National Fund for tree-planting in Israel. Any profits made are going to the above address.

\* \* \*

The friends of the Central London meeting announce that the last Sunday in every month will in future be devoted to a consideration of current events amongst the nations and particularly as they concern Israel in the light of the prophecies. An address at 3.0 p.m. followed by a study at 5.15 p.m., with a brief interval in between for tea, is the arrangement. The place of meeting is Minerva Club, 28A Brunswick Square, W.C.1, and brethren who would like to take advantage of this opportunity will be warmly welcomed.

\* \* \*

A provincial brother is anxious to trace the origin of the statement in "*Scripture Studies*" to the effect that in ancient times Eastern kings had a spokesman who stood in front of a screen, behind which the king was seated, and transmitted the sovereign's words to the assembled people, and that this official was known as the king's "Logos." The allusion was intended to illustrate the usage of the term "Logos" (translated "Word") as applied to the Son of God, made flesh, in the Gospel of John. The Editor has

in past times tried to find what foundation this statement had but has been unsuccessful. Is there one of our readers who may have endeavoured to track this alleged custom to its source, and succeeded? The brother concerned would much appreciate any help that the studies of others might afford in this matter. Please write to Bro. Hudson at 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent, who will both pass it on to the brother concerned and also publish the allusion in the "Monthly" for general interest.

\* \* \*

It is our custom to send a "renewal notice" at the expiry of every year to each of our readers and this is entirely to satisfy ourselves that the magazine is still being received and is still wanted. The journal is maintained entirely by means of voluntary gifts, but we are very anxious that all who appreciate and desire it shall continue to have it even though they may not be able to contribute financially. Please therefore do not fail to return the notice purely upon grounds of being unable to pay anything towards the cost; we are glad to serve all who are disciples of the Lord Jesus, and we are sure that so long as it is His will for the magazine to continue the means will be found. In order to be sure that no recipient is crossed off the list unduly hurriedly, we usually send a couple of "follow-up" notices if the renewal notice is not returned, but this all costs money and it is much appreciated if friends will advise their wishes as soon as they see the first notice. If we have received either a gift or some indication of sustained interest during the few months preceding the expiry we automatically renew for another year without troubling you with a renewal notice.

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### Gone from us

Sister M. Crowther (*Manchester*)

Sister M. Seek (*Bognor*)

*"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."*

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## THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

An Exhortation for the New Year

There can be no finer message for the New Year than the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This is the age-old commission of the Christian, to tell the good tidings of the Divine purpose in creation to all who will listen; to be instant in season, out of season, preaching the Word; to shine as a light in the world, and to hold forth the Word of Life. From that day, more than nineteen centuries ago, when Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem . . . HEARKEN . . ." that mission has never been abrogated. The message of repentance and conversion, of High Calling and Restitution, has gone on through the centuries, finding its way into every corner of the world, even as was predicted by Jesus, bearing fruit appropriate to this Age; and goes on still, and will go on, into that Millennial Kingdom Age which is to succeed the present, bearing again rich fruit in that day to the glory of God.

Now there are two aspects to this theme, both of which repay examination. First, what is this Gospel of the Kingdom; second, how and to whom shall it be preached? Both questions need to be answered not only in the light of our understanding of Scripture texts but also in harmony with the examples set by our Lord and His apostles, who are for all time the patterns and guides of our own Christian life and activity.

And these questions must be answered. We stand to-day amid the misery, turmoil and destruction which after-war has brought in its train, uncertain what the future is to bring forth. Our faith has survived: we believe still in the coming of the Kingdom. Let us thank God for that. Our liberty to preach the Gospel without let or hindrance, to worship how and where we will, to serve our Lord according to the dictates of our own consciences, is ours still. Let us thank God for that also. But the status of Christian discipleship is not given to us for purely selfish ends, nor that we should organise ourselves into an exclusive little religious club that shuts itself away from the world and refuses to face up to the tremendous problems that the cessation of total war has left as a bitter legacy to the sons of men. The Church of this Gospel Age is truly a separated Church, a suffering Church, a Church living by a power not of this world; but it is also a universal Church, a missionary Church,

a Church that is the earthly sanctuary of the Holy Spirit of God, and in the power of that tremendous dynamic it must, like the rider of Revelation, go forth conquering and to conquer — or else perish.

In this post-war world, then we must preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. What is that Gospel?

The answer can be sought within the framework of our Lord's first recorded public utterance (see Mark 1, 15). That utterance enshrined two exhortations and a statement of fact. "*Repent . . . Believe the Gospel . . . The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*"

There are two phases of the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God — the terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament). One phase is heavenly and the other is to be earthly. The earthly phase of the Kingdom was *not* then, at that time, at hand; but the doors of the heavenly phase were about to swing open to admit those who would enter. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that day the Kingdom of Heaven is preached and every man presseth into it." (Luke 16, 16). The invitation to the earthly phase will not be issued until Christ's reign upon earth has commenced at the time of His revelation (*apokalupsis*) to all men in His Millennial Kingdom, and that in turn must wait until the last entrant to the heavenly phase has completed his earthly course and has been "changed" as Paul puts it in I Cor. 15, 51 to heavenly conditions, to be joined with the Lord Jesus Christ in the kingship and priesthood of that Millennial reign, even as it is written "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20, 4).

Repentance, then, is the first theme to be stressed in our proclamation of this Gospel. "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" thundered the stentorian voice of the rugged Galilean fisherman who took the lead on that first day of Gospel preaching (Acts 2, 14). "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" wrote Luke in milder words (Luke 24, 27). The people had been in some measure prepared for this message by the forthright denunciations of John the Baptist, and, to those who had been students of the Hebrew Scriptures, the passionate eloquence of Isaiah "Though your sins

be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (Isaiah 1, 18). So it should be with us; in all our endeavours to enlighten men with the light wherewith we ourselves have been enlightened, right in the forefront we must place the demand for repentance and conversion. Not until the wicked man has turned from his evil ways and begun to do that which is lawful and right can he begin to appreciate the principles by which alone he shall save his soul alive (Ezek. 18, 27). And not until the one who hears has repented of his own share in the world's sin, and—more than that—repented of all the sin that is in the world and has come to Jesus to learn how he may help in the recovery of the world from that sin, is it of much avail to speak to him of the future glories God has in store for humanity.

Here there is exemplified one of the great principles by which creation is ordered. Repentance and conversion implies reason and persuasion. It cannot be effected by force. It is impossible to bring about true repentance in a man against his will. Neither is it God's design. No man will be coerced into righteous dealing. God has created man a creature of free will, and although it is a primal law of creation that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18, 4) and although it is clear to us that there is some quality in the state of sin which inevitably destroys the life of the one who harbours sin, no man will be made righteous and forced to continue in life against his own will. Even although in the Millennial Age all men will be awakened from the sleep of death and introduced to a new world order in which the outward practice of evil is, by Divine power, completely restrained, it is only that they all may have the opportunity freely to accept, or reject, Christ without the hindering effects of surrounding sin upon the would-be righteous. It will still be necessary for each of those awakened ones to hear the Gospel preached, and hearing it, to repent, and be converted, and come to Christ in absolute surrender and dedication, if they are to reap the benefits of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. Unless they in this manner do become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, they will be denied entrance into the Holy City (see Rev. 21, 27) and, dying in their sin, be as though they had never been (Psa. 37, 10).

After repentance, "believe the Gospel." There is no real difference between "the Gospel" as such, and the "Gospel of the Kingdom." There are many facets of Truth which one must "believe" after conversion before the beauty and harmony of God's Plan of the Ages can be appreciated in its fulness. First of all comes full and complete acceptance of Christ, of His life and death, as essential to the salvation of the believer. We can and do according to our several philosophies define

to our own satisfaction just *why* this acceptance of Christ is necessary in the sight of God to our reconciliation with Him, but the fact remains when all is said and done that it is an act of faith and love which brings us to the feet of Jesus and leads us to say "Lord, I believe . . . thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It is that belief, reinforced by the outward evidence of a change of heart which we call conversion, that brings justification by faith, the condition of being at peace with God and of reconciliation with Him (Rom. 5, 1).

This justification however, fails of its greatest potentiality unless it leads the believer to dedicate his whole life to the service of God in the interests of His Plan. That realisation of Divine goodness which led the believer to acceptance of Christ and consequent justification should logically lead him on to explore the deeper mysteries of the Divine dealings with men, and realising God's purpose of blessing for all, to place himself at the Divine disposal to be used in such manner and at such time as God will ordain. And this we call consecration.

The highest level of Christian experience to-day lies in the profession and practice of the consecrated life—but it is not a monastic life. It is not a life which is given to shrinking and withdrawal from the world and its problems, the fears and sorrows, the strifes and perplexities, of the world of men. The term itself is taken from the function of the Levites of old in the economy of Israel. They were set apart from the nation in that they served purely in the things of God, they possessed no material inheritance in the land, they were commissioned to devote themselves heart and soul to the duties of their calling; but they were to live amongst the people, scattered through the length and breadth of the land, sharing the people's joys and sorrows, and ministering to them in the things of the spirit. They were to be teachers, counsellors and leaders in the higher spiritual matters of life; and this is the duty of the consecrated Christian of to-day.

There is an object in this. The Christian, if he does in fact fulfil this commission, becomes qualified thereby for the much greater work of the next Age when all men will be summoned before the great white throne of Rev. 20, 11 to learn of God's plans for their welfare. This Gospel which Jesus exhorted His hearers to believe does not end with the translation to heaven of the faithful consecrated Christians of this Age. The stage will then be set for those "Times of Restitution of all things" to which Peter referred, an Age during which all men, the dead as well as the living, will be brought back to life upon earth and experience the benefits of an earthly order of society over which Christ and His glorified Church will have assumed control.

Other discourses of Jesus show that this Gospel includes also a recognition of the fact that the powers of this world will not submit to this new state of society without a struggle. Jesus knew, what men have not yet realised, that the existing order based on force and selfishness must inevitably effect its own destruction. We in our day see what seems most assuredly to be the final phase of that headlong descent into catastrophe. Jesus told His disciples that He would return to earth at this crisis, His presence (*parousia*) being at first known only to His own followers, the while the world rushed heedlessly along its doomed course. Later on there would come the dawning consciousness of a new influence making itself felt in the world, and at length, when all who are of the Church had been translated to spiritual life to work forever with Christ, the full revelation of Himself in His glory to all men. From that latter point of time the Kingdom of Christ on earth commences to date, and the binding of Satan, that he may deceive the nations no more, be counted an accomplished fact. And of course that tremendous sequel must await the final collapse of the "kingdoms of this world" (Rev. 11, 15). Hence part of this Gospel is that truth so fervently held by the Early Church, that the systems of this world order are quite incapable of reformation and must inevitably pass away and give place to the universal Kingdom of Christ.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" It was the heavenly phase of that Kingdom upon which emphasis was laid in the days of the First Advent, but behind that emphasis lay the promise of the earthly. Now in our day the position is different. This Age has all but run its course; the pattern of world history, the events of to-day, the mood and temper of men, all tell us that. It is with confidence that we proclaim the imminence of the earthly Kingdom, and if we interpret the present signs aright as pointing to the Second Presence of our Lord being already an accomplished fact, then most certainly the time of His revelation to all men is within measurable reach. And if we are in fact perceiving the first rosy fingers of dawn, the herald of that "astrapé" which shall shortly flame over the eastern hills and turn the darkness of earth's night into meridian day, why then surely our commission is to thunder forth as never before the message that first was heard on Jordan's banks:

*"Repent . . . Believe the Gospel . . . The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"*

\* \* \*

How then, and to whom, shall we preach this message?

Peter at Pentecost, Paul to the Athenians; these men were in no doubt over the matter. Words they had but recently heard, vibrant words, thrilling

words, sounded still in their ears. "Go ye, make disciples of all nations." "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . to the uttermost parts of the earth." "And as ye go, preach, saying 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" There can be no mistaking the import of these words. We are to be Christ's missionaries, ambassadors of His Kingdom, bearing the glad tidings wheresoever it can find lodgment.

This is truly a "sowing," but not the "sowing" in a dispensational sense which is followed by a harvest at the end of the Age. To realise this clearly will avoid some confusion of thought. "So is the Kingdom of God" said Jesus, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground . . . and the seed should spring and grow up . . . first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear . . . and immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." (Mark 4, 26-29). That is the dispensational sowing at the commencement of this Age, and He that sowed the seed is the Son of Man. He, too, comes to gather the harvest at the end of the Age (Rev. 14, 14-16). Although we as Christ's followers are intimately concerned with this dispensational sowing and reaping, this is not the same thing as that personal, individual missionary work which goes on during every century of the Age, sowing and reaping progressing side by side. Throughout all this Gospel Age, yea, and throughout all the Millennial Age which follows it, our commission remains unchanged; "Go . . . make disciples of all nations."

The primary purpose of this commission at the present time is for our own experience and training. The Father knows full well that though the Gospel be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, though we faithfully and strenuously fulfil our commission to be His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth, though we make ourselves all things to all men that we might by any means save some, there will only be a "little flock" that will give heed and come into present-day covenant relationship with God. No other outcome can be expected. God has determined that the masses of humanity shall be reached and converted by ways of reason and persuasion; man will attain his destiny on a basis of intelligent conviction, and it is necessary therefore that before "world conversion" on a universal scale is even attempted there must be a fully trained and qualified body of "missionaries" able and ready to carry out that stupendous work. The discharge of that responsibility is in Divine wisdom to be the mission of the Christian Church. The present time therefore is the training-time; this world as it is now is the training-ground; the adverse conditions of the present order of society the means by which each member of that Church will become so inflexibly set for the righteousness

of God and so experienced in and sympathetic with the woes of the "groaning creation" that he will be abundantly able, in that day, to turn men from sin to serve the living God.

If then we do believe in this coming Kingdom of God upon earth and its standards, we will want to proclaim it now. If this Gospel is so good to us then we shall not want to hide it. Like Jeremiah of old we shall feel like saying "His word was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." We know that men need this message, that it will solve all their problems and bring about peace on earth. We know that it is a good message, fraught with mighty power for the reclamation of the world. We know that it must be preached, for so it is written; and with Paul we can only cry out "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Therefore the strongest incentive to consistent and persistent witness to the Gospel is the effect of that witness upon ourselves. The consequence of its impact upon the world in general is merely secondary—at present. The time when the world's needs come to the forefront for attention is not yet—it lies just around the corner, where the light of the Messianic Kingdom is gathering ready to break forth upon the world. And as for ourselves, let us pause and reflect, what history has shown to be a truism, that the Christian movement or fellowship that loses the missionary spirit signs its own death-warrant. Christianity is essentially a missionary faith, and the light that is within us can only continue to burn if its radiance is continually flowing outwards to give illumination all around.

How shall the witness be given? Shall we leave it to the eloquent tongues of those gifted with fluent speech and the swiftly flowing pens of those who can set down their vision on paper? By no means. This is a work in which all who are Christ's, simple or cultured, slow-thinking or quick-witted, can have their place, each serving according to the measure of the Spirit which God has bestowed. We must never forget that the Apostles themselves were for the most part, illiterate, uncultured men of the workaday world, unused to the finely polished speech and intellectual outlook of the wise and learned. It was their possession of the Holy Spirit, their love for their Lord, their consciousness of a mission to be performed, that gave them both inspiration for their message and the words in which to clothe it. So it can be with us. Be they never so halting and stumbling, the words in which the simplest child of God expresses the faith which for him or her has transformed the world are messengers of Divine Truth to another who is ready for the living waters. And for those who cannot speak at all, there is the

Christian life to be lived, more powerful by far than any sermon.

There is no set rule, then. Clearly the more usual as well as the most spectacular method of spreading the message is by public oratory—"public meetings"—and the printed page. Many less obvious methods will commend themselves to some, and there is no limit to the variety of means by which "Christ is preached."

The disciples, of course, had one means only—word of mouth. There was no such thing as the printed page in their day. Now we have various means of mechanically recording human speech so as to multiply its scope and circulation a thousand-fold—printing, pictures, films, the radio, to name but a few. And all of these, to the extent that is practically possible, could and should be laid under tribute to play their part in preaching this glorious Gospel. If the children were to hold their peace, said Jesus, the very stones would cry out; and so now, if one form of preaching seems to have lost its effectiveness or its appeal, we must expect some other means to be found to take its place, for the Gospel must be preached.

It was said by men of old time "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." What a testimony! Those early Christians in their faith and zeal rocked the Roman world, and so imperative was their challenge that the old paganism fought desperately for a while, trembled—and fell. We too, if we will, can turn the world upside down, and take our stand beside those stalwart pioneers of those early days. But we shall only do it if, in full confidence of faith, and burning zeal for the service of our Lord and Master, we declare, in season and out of season, whether they hear or whether they forbear, the message of the Age, the message of to-day, the message for every man—"Repent . . . Believe the Gospel . . . The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

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"The Church is my battle-ground, not my dug-out, and I feel I am to be envied by those who deplore the fact that they can only preach to the converted" (W. R. Burwell in "Christian Pacifist").

\* \* \*

No place for Him in the inn, no place of His own in which to lay His head, no burial place but a borrowed tomb. Humanly speaking, if ever there was a wasted life it was the life of Jesus when here amongst men. When viewed from the Divine standpoint a different conclusion is reached

## LONDON CONVENTION 1956

Part III  
Monday

Monday, 6 August, came. On this, the last day of the Convention, an unusually large number of brethren — unusually large for the final day, that is—were early in attendance at Conway Hall to share in the fellowship and rejoice in the ministry.

The first speaker at the morning session was Bro. W. J. Siekman of U.S.A. Taking, as his theme, "*Joy in the Morning*," our brother centred our minds on the Psalm in which that well-known text is found. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." In a voice vibrant with sympathy for the woes of mankind he posed the question "Who can measure the mountain of human suffering?" "I cannot forget it" he exclaimed, "even in the midst of all the good things of life." Day by day, the tragedy of human suffering goes on. Does God care? Does He look down and see these things, and take pity? Ah yes! Three thousand years ago the Psalmist asked that question and gave the answer, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord." (Psa. 102, 16-18). All this will be when the Lord has looked down from the height of his sanctuary, as the Psalm goes on to say, to hear the groaning of the prisoner and loose those that are appointed to death. And all this is centred in Him Who was born in Bethlehem. The Lord has said that heaven is His throne and earth is his footstool; and He is going to make the place of His feet glorious. The glory of the Lord is to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea — and the ocean in some places is six miles deep. The glory of the Lord is to be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. Not only are the living nations inheritors of the promise, but all the eighteen million millions who sleep in the dust of the earth. He will wipe away all tears from all eyes in that day when men cry out "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him and he will save us. We have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." And for ourselves, we who look for a salvation above and beyond the material things of this earth, a heavenly destiny in closest union with our beloved Lord, we can only re-echo the cry "How long, O Lord, how long?"

The second address of the morning session was given by Bro. G. H. Jennings (*London*) on the theme "*We shall be changed.*" This theme, said Bro. Jennings, leads us to contemplate the unsur-

passed joy and blessings which await us in the life beyond the Vail. We stand to-day in the shadow of mighty events which in their occurrence explain to us the word of prophecy. The time must soon come concerning which the Apostle spoke saying, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." That time is very near at hand and the outward signs confirm the inward expectation. Today the Arab peoples are banding together and preparing for that great climax which the Scriptures say must surely come. It is in that context that we must consider I Cor. 15, 52, and consider the significance of this great thing, "we shall be changed." In another place the Apostle tells us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption. We can only be changed by resurrection, and I Cor. 15 establishes the doctrine of the resurrection. Some have fallen asleep and the resurrection is the termination of their sleep; but, he says, all will not fall asleep and those who do not fall asleep will be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The Church is to be made like her Lord. God exerted His mighty power to raise Christ from the dead, and having done so He set Him far above all angels, principalities and powers, even at His own right hand. So with us, as we are told in Phil. 3, 21, God will "change" our body into conformity with Christ's glorious body that we may be like Him. Our Lord now has all power in heaven and earth and He awaits His own, faithful to their covenant while on earth and joined to Him by the change from earthly to heavenly nature. The time is at hand; "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished."

After the lunch interval the brethren gathered for the final session of the Convention. As with the Sunday evening service, so now, there was a prelude of song and praise rendered reverently and with dignity by the Choir. The chairman then introduced Bro. John Dawson, of U.S.A., who had chosen to talk to the brethren on "*God's music*," illustrating his discourse by the aid of a large "Divine Plan" chart upon which he was able to place, in appropriate positions and from time to time, symbolic figures depicting notes on the musical scale. First of all, said Bro. Dawson, if we would learn God's music we must have a good teacher. Our teacher is Christ. Then we must have a good instruction book. Our instruction book

is the Bible. Then we must have a good ear for music, and we must be good listeners. Furthermore we must have a good key — our key is C, for Christ. "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore and have the keys of hell and of death." After the key we must see to it that we have the correct time — God's music is always on time. The man Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Due time is God's time. On the music score there are marked little signs for sharps and flats to give us the key, and again that key is Christ. At the side of the score are placed symbols indicating loud, louder, very loud; or very soft. In God's music there are some experiences which are soft ones; "he leadeth me beside the still waters," and in others we are called upon to "lift up thy voice like a trumpet." That is double forte. David opened the Word by saying he would praise God upon an instrument of ten strings. "Praise is comely for the upright," he says. Those ten strings can be looked on in this fashion.

First string — Creation.

Second string — Sin.

Third string — Abrahamic Covenant.

Fourth string — The birth of Jesus.

Fifth string — The ransom, the corresponding price.

Sixth string — The Ascension.

Seventh string — The Church.

Eighth string — The Second Coming or Second Presence of Jesus.

Ninth string — Glorification of the Church.

Tenth string — Human perfection.

Now returning to our music score we have to realise that the lines and spaces have their significance. The lines take five notes in the octave, E, G, B, D, F. They stand in God's music for Evil, Good, Begetting, Deliverance and Faithful. The spaces are assigned to notes in the scale F, A, C, E, and these correspond in God's music to Faith, Accept, Changed and Exalted. So by analogy we can take a lesson from these simple elements of music and find in our own hearts a response to the great Master Musician Who is seeking to produce, at the end, one vast harmony in which "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord."

The final discourse of the Convention was by Bro. A. O. Hudson (*Welling*) who spoke on the subject "*Unto the Perfect Day*" based on the well-known text in Prov. 4, 23. Bro. Hudson referred to the first convention we held in Conway Hall, the year 1931, when he addressed the opening session on the subject "*High Time to awake out of sleep.*" A quarter of a century had passed since then, and those who had lived through those twenty-five years had seen great changes. Not the least

of the problems now confronting us was the question whether the light had indeed "shone more and more unto the perfect day" in our walk together as a fellowship. Forty years ago that verse in Prov. 4, 18 was the watchword of what was then called, and what some of us still call, "Present Truth." It was fervently believed then that the time of doctrinal doubt and confusion was past for ever and that dispensational truth would grow brighter and brighter until we all found ourselves in the Kingdom. A mighty work of Kingdom proclamation which has never since been equalled was conducted in the flush of that conviction, a work having its roots in the firm belief that the Kingdom was not more than a few years away and the Son of Man was present preparing to take control. Now we have to realise that this early impetus has spent itself, the passage of years and disappointed expectations have dimmed the radiance of the early vision and that as an organisation or as a fellowship — in what particular fellowship we now find ourselves — the light has not gone on advancing. And many have lost their faith or changed their minds and no longer hold the joyous expectations they once held. But the Scripture cannot fail and it must be true that the path of the just is as a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The truth of it is that we individually, as devoted followers of Christ, find our personal pathway illumined more and more as we progress toward the Heavenly Kingdom, if we endure, and hold fast to the things we have learned and proved for ourselves to be of value. It matters not then if the organisation or the fellowship seems to have failed us if we ourselves, having once seen the golden vision, retain it in our own hearts to the end of our days. We each have a pathway illumined for us leading straight to God, like the moon-track in the waters which we see at the seaside. No two observers ever see the same path of light in the waters; each goes to the observer's own feet but they all point and lead to the same goal. So we need to remember that other Watchword once so familiar, "A people for a purpose." God requires our lives to be purposeful. In Central America, in the Maya country, there is an ancient ceremonial road along which consecrated youths and maidens used to pass to throw themselves into a deep underground lake as a sacrifice to the sun-god. A useless sacrifice productive of nothing. But some Christian lives to-day, sincerely devoted to God, are just as uselessly non-productive. In ancient Babylon there used to be an annual procession in which the image of Bel was carried in state around the city amidst rejoicings and ceremonies, but he eventually arrived back at his own Temple and stood there for another year. He

never got any farther. Some Christians to-day are like that too. They see a great many interesting things and do a great many interesting things but they only go around in circles and with all their activity they never get anywhere. We must always remember that there is purpose in God's plans for us, purpose in the future Age and purpose in the present life. Jesus is the Light of the world and He banishes darkness. He will shed

more and more light on our pathway if we are prepared to follow Him and serve Him and fulfil His purposes, "until the perfect day."

On this note the Convention closed, and with the singing of "*God be with you till we meet again*," the brethren parted to carry away with them some of the blessings and inspiration that had been afforded by this three-day "holy convocation unto the Lord."

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## INTO THE NEW YEAR

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Reprinted from the  
"Herald of Christ's Kingdom"

Back of us lies the travelled road; before us the uncharted pathway of the New Year. We wish one another a Happy Year, and happiness should be increasing in each year if we know its true meaning, and go the right way to secure it.

How then, shall we estimate the worth of the passing year to us? Surely not in material things, but in spiritual values; by qualitative tests we may apply to our own hearts. Let us ask ourselves: Have we grown richer in the fruit of the spirit? Do we know Christ better than we did a year ago? Does He mean more to us, and things less; and what do we plan for this new year as the chief end of all its effort? Are we consciously determined that we shall make it a year of closer accord with the purpose of God, and give us a greater intimacy with the Master? that lifts life above self-regard to the joyous plane of living for others?—If we have found the real meaning of life, then, living should be a sweet and worth-while thing to the last moment—even though it be marked by pain and disappointment, by loss and sorrows as for most of us it must be. If we have learned to discern the real values, we will not need to hide from ourselves the fact that we are growing older by the count of weeks and months, for the real values are eternal. We are not hurrying toward an hour when everything must be dropped, but rather moving with expectant hearts toward the hour when hope may be realised, when faith may lay hold of its richest treasures, when love may come into its full inheritance. For us, life is not narrowing toward the grave, it is broadening toward eternity. It approaches its birthday, the Dawn lies ahead. There are songs for the thoughtful in the passing of the year, remembering God's leading in the old, and laying triumphant hold upon His promises for the new.

The infallible recipe for happiness then, is to do good, and the infallible recipe for doing good is to

abide in Christ; let us note that joy is a fruit, and like all other fruits must be *grown*; the Christian graces come under the law of cause and effect. None can get joy merely by prayer, although that contributes, but it is one of the ripest fruits of Christian life, and must be grown. When Jesus spoke the parable of the Vine to His disciples, He gave the secret of His happiness, and, for His joy to remain in us, the cause which produced it should continue to act if they copied His life; His kind of joy would remain with them. No man can make things grow. He can arrange circumstances and fulfil conditions, but the growing is done by God, causes and effects are eternal arrangements, and man can place himself in fulfilling conditions of growth. No violent over-strained exertions are necessary to a noble life, nothing possible or greater than simple faithfulness.

*One thing more.* If seeking to lose our lives in the service of Christ means practically living for others, let us live by the day. Some of us try to grasp too much of life at a time; we think of it as a whole instead of a day. The only way to make a radiant day is to make each hour bright with the lustre of approved fidelity, keeping the days as they pass pure with holy, useful living. Each day is one white page open before us, to fill it in as a record of duty or victory. Let us remember our God, and remember those in need about us, to stretch forth a helping hand, and keep our heart open toward Heaven.

*We would fill the hours with the sweetest things  
If we had but a day.*

*We should rest, not for dreams but for fresher  
power  
To be and to do.*

*We should take whatever our good God sent  
With a trust complete.*

## DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

### 8. The Beginning of Visions

*NOTE*

The seventh chapter of Daniel begins what is virtually an independent book—the book of visions. The first six chapters are histories; they relate events that took place during the space of some seventy years from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign to the beginning of Cyrus' reign—all the time of the first universal empire, that of Babylon. Chapter 7 goes back some seventeen years, to the first year of Belshazzar the last native king of Babylon, and tells of the visions which came to the aged prophet and have been of such surpassing interest to every generation of "watchers" from that day to this.

*NOTE*

At this time Daniel was about seventy-four years of age. His old master and friend, King Nebuchadnezzar, had been dead for eleven years. He was no longer chief of the wise men of Babylon; all his official ranks had gone and he lived as a private citizen, almost certainly among his own fellow-exiles in some residential quarter of the city. His only friend at court was probably Queen Nitocris, younger daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, wife of Nabonidus the reigning monarch, and mother of Belshazzar, who this very year had been promoted to joint-rule with his father. The voice of Ezekiel had been silent for twenty-one years so that although he was only Daniel's age, we do not know whether he was alive or dead. So far as the Book of Daniel itself indicates, the prophet was alone, and in solitude recorded for future generations the vivid vision-pictures with which we as prophetic students have become so familiar.

Here then in the first year of Belshazzar Daniel slept and dreamed. In earlier years the purposes of God had been conveyed to the mind of the great king by means of dreams — the dream of the great image, the dream of the great tree, and Daniel had been employed as the agent in making known to the king the meaning of the dreams. From those dreams we have our first understanding of the Divine arrangement of Gentile Times followed by the setting up of the Kingdom of God. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome; these are the four successive empires, from Nebuchadnezzar's day to our own, succeeded by the incoming and all-conquering Kingdom of God, pictured by the manlike image of gold, silver, copper and iron. The "Seven Times" during which the tree of the dream was to be bound with iron and copper has been held by many to indicate in symbolic language the duration of those Gentile

Times; without embarking on the hazardous seas of chronological speculation it can certainly be admitted that the mystic number 2520, which is the equivalent of symbolic "seven times" is a significant one in the succession of periods which make up human history as it is punctuated by events momentous from the standpoint of the Divine Plan. It cannot be denied that the cycle of 2520 years, from the inception of the "head of gold" empire brings us just about to the present day when it is patent to the most casual observer that the feet of iron are about to collapse into the sea of burning flame and so go into utter destruction, just as is indicated under other symbols in the vision of Daniel 7 which we are now about to examine. We have therefore already a direct connection between the days of Daniel and our own day as the beginning and ending of an epoch in the outworking of God's purposes leading directly to the inauguration of the greatest epoch of all — the Kingdom of God upon earth.

The king's vision was one of human pride and achievement — a colossal image of a man, towering up into the skies. Daniel's dream was of something very different — a manifestation of beast-like forces begotten of chaos, striving together for mastery, and finally disappearing before the superior power of the Lord from Heaven. There are therefore important lessons for all Christians to be learned from the pictures that flickered across the prophet's sleeping mind on that quiet night in ancient Babylon so many thousands of years ago.

Detailed interpretations of the dream, both Historical and Futurist, are legion and there is no intention here of adding to the number. In a treatise which is descriptive of the life of Daniel in Babylon such detailed interpretation of prophecy would not be altogether in place. But because this treatise is a life of Daniel in Babylon something of the background of the dream, something of what it meant to Daniel and his people at that time, is most decidedly in place, and upon that background the prophetic students may, if they will, proceed to elaborate their interpretations.

"I saw in my vision by night," says Daniel, "and, behold, the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another . . ." (Ch. 7, v. 1). The account goes on to describe the first beast as like a lion with eagles' wings, rearing up

on its hind legs in the endeavour to walk as a man, and, too, having a man's heart. Then came a second, like a bear, in a recumbent position, but with one foreleg flexed as though in the act of getting up. Thirdly, a leopard with four heads and four wings, and finally, a beast so alien to all known animals and so terrible in its aspect that Daniel was hard put to it to find words sufficiently descriptive.

The life of the four beasts was brief. There came a great appearance in the heavens, the setting of celestial thrones and the coming of the Most High for judgment; the arraignment of those beasts before Him and their condemnation and destruction in the fiery flame. Then the sequel; the advent of a mighty one, the Son of Man, to receive the kingship of earth and rule over it in a kingdom which should never pass away. Four beasts, born of chaos, doomed to destruction, are succeeded by an everlasting kingdom. Taken in conjunction with the earlier vision of the great image, the application and the meaning almost immediately suggests itself.

Daniel had lived in Babylon for more than fifty years, the greater part of his life. He was thoroughly versed in the history, the mythology, and the folk-lore of the Babylonians. He had been Chief of all their wise men, their priesthoods and their philosophers. It would not be surprising therefore if the "background" of his dream, or as we might say, the "setting", had a distinctly Babylonian flavour. In such a manner the meaning and application of the dream would be much more readily grasped by those devout Jews in Babylon who were to be the immediate recipients of this Divine revelation.

The four winds "strove upon the great sea". That expression goes right back to the beginning of Babylonian mythology. The old stories of creation told of a time before the gods had made man, or the solid earth that was man's home, when all was chaos, a dark and dismal abyss in which the winds and waters raged and howled, and nothing had any shape or form. That chaos was personified by the Babylonians and pictured as a terrible monster named Tiamat. When the time of creation drew near, Bel-Marduk the life-giver, the Son of Ea the God of Heaven, came forth with his arrows of light to overcome and slay Tiamat and turn the dark chaos into the ordered earth illumined by the light of the sun, preparatory to creating man upon it. All of which, of course, can be traced back pretty clearly to the original truth expressed in Genesis, "In the beginning the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said 'Let there be light'

and there was light." And the subsequent work of creation was carried out by One "without whom was not anything made that was made" the only-begotten Son of God.

The Hebrew word for "deep" in Gen. 1, 1 is "tehom" which is the Hebrew equivalent of "Tiamat" and is directly derived from that Babylonian word.

So Daniel saw these four beast-like creatures emerging from the darkness and confusion of chaos and of evil. They were not from God; they did not have their origin in the heavens; they came from the earth and from the basest elements of the earth, and because they were thus born of chaos they must sooner or later meet the powers of heaven in mortal conflict, and be overthrown. That at least was the first fundamental truth Daniel drew from this vivid dream.

The first beast was like a lion with eagle's wings, a familiar creature to Daniel. There were many such in Babylon. Stone lions with eagles' wings and usually with human heads stood guard at every palace gateway and temple portico. There are two standing at present in the British Museum. Walls, buildings and gateways were adorned with sculptured reliefs of the same creatures. The winged lion was the symbol of Babylon, just as Landseer's lions in Trafalgar Square are the symbols of Britain. Daniel, seeing that creature in his dream, knew at once and without any doubt that he was looking upon the symbol of the world-empire that had been pictured in the "head of gold" of the image — the empire of Babylon.

But this lion was standing, rearing itself up on its hind legs like a man, whereas the winged lions of Babylon are usually pictured standing on all fours, or recumbent. That, too, must have suggested something else to Daniel's mind. When the lions or other creatures of Babylonian mythology were pictured as rearing up on two legs it was because they were fighting an enemy. So with the lion of Daniel's dream. It had a man's heart, the sagacity and intelligence of a man — maybe the outstanding soldier whose skill and sagacity established the empire, Nebuchadnezzar — but it was fighting for its life all the time and eventually it went down before its foes.

Daniel saw that happen in the dream. The A.V. is not quite correct. Vs. 4 should read "I beheld till the wings were plucked *wherewith* it was lifted up from the earth . . ." Daniel lived to see the wings plucked.

The second beast was a bear, a beast alien to Babylonian mythology, for there were never any bears in Babylonia. Bears are creatures of the

wooded mountains and the land of the two rivers has no mountains and few trees. Here was an alien power which "raised up itself on one side." That part of the picture would be familiar to Daniel, for the sculptures of Babylon did show animals with one foreleg bent in recumbent position and the other straightened as the beast "rose up to the prey." So, eventually, Persia, the land of mountains and of bears, the silver breast of the image, sprang upon Babylon, Egypt and Lydia, and devoured them, just as the bear in the vision devoured the flesh from the three ribs it carried in its mouth.

Daniel could not have known, by his own unaided knowledge, what was prefigured by the four-winged and four headed leopard, the third beast of his dream. Very possibly though his mind was enlightened by the Holy Spirit, so that in some dim way he was able to see into futurity and sense something of the swiftly-moving armies of Greece which spread the third empire so rapidly over the four quarters of the world, and when it had reached its widest limits at the death of Alexander the Great, became divided into four realms under four heads. It remained for later historians to show how accurately the march of events fitted the circumstances of the dream.

Then came the fourth beast, "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth . . . and it had ten horns." This beast was evidently unlike any known earthly animal and its aspect was such as to strike terror into the beholder. This was the beast which figured most prominently in the Divine judgment shortly to come, and with that hint as to its continued existence right up until the time of that judgment it is not surprising that most students think of Rome, the successor of Greece in world rulership, destined

to rule until the Son of Man should come in the glory of His Kingdom and sweep away every vestige of man's rule from the earth. According to Daniel, this beast more than them all was the enemy of God's saints and made war against them; this, said the angel, shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth and shall not only prevail over the saints but shall speak blasphemy against the Most High and prevail during the mystic period of trial and persecution, the time, times and half a time, the twelve hundred and sixty days which always betokens oppression, persecution and testing of the faithful in God. One wonders if this strange and terrible beast which Daniel saw in his vision was in fact the dragon or serpent of Babylon, the mysterious *sirrussu*, whose form is so often seen on the sculptures of that ancient city. That was a creature like nothing known in Nature. The four bronze serpents guarding the gateway of the Temple of Bel-Marduk in Babylon were *sirrussu*. More than anything else that mythical creature symbolised the power of evil and the archangel of evil, the Devil himself, and when in the Scriptures the dragon or the serpent are mentioned, it is always this strange and terrible beast that is in mind. From Daniel to Revelation there is the same idea made prominent; the dragon of ancient Babylon is manifest in that great power which for twenty out of the twenty-five centuries of Gentile Times has wielded its crushing iron rule over the nations and persecuted the saints of God.

But this was not the end of the dream. The forces of heaven were moving to judgment and away in the celestial realm the outraged holiness of God was ready now to sweep back into the oblivion of chaos all these beast-like systems which for so long had usurped His domain.

*To be continued.*

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## THE ANTHEM OF THE FLOWERS

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Almighty Jehovah, we adore Thee! Thou who studded the earth with our beautiful faces. Decked in all the colours of Thy glorious rainbow, we glow with tender radiance in the soft moonlight or unfold in a thousand brilliant hues 'neath the sun. We carpet the hill-sides. We riot in the meadows. We fill with fragrance and beauty the dim aisles of the forest. The waters lovingly reflect our sweet faces and the snow proudly wears us as gems on her bosom.

With rapture, little children hold us close to their hearts and in their own language prattle sweet love words. We bring to the bedside of the weary and sick the breath of the forest, the glory of the meadows and the breath of the roadside and the

garden. We rejoice in our loveliness. We rejoice in our mission to delight the eyes of men and to lift up their heads in wonder and adoration.

Oh Jehovah, our Creator, if all the glory and beauty of our tiny faces is but an infinitesimal reflection of Thee, what must Thou, Thyself, be in all the glory and beauty of Thy Being! and what must be the rapture not only of those who behold Thee, but those also who shall yet have the glorious privilege, not only to look upon Thee, but to be made like Thee, as they fall before Thee in praise and worship. We, too, lift our thousand faces unto Thee in silent adoration. Jehovah We Adore Thee.

*Rebecca Fair Doney.*

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## A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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With the opening of another year we look backward over the past and forward into the future.

The year just ended to some has been full of trial, as the great Refiner and Purifier has had them in the furnace to separate the dross from the gold, and to cause them to reflect His image. Happy are they who, being tried by the fire, have not been found wanting, but have had their hearts more firmly established in the truth, and who have let go of the traditions of men and taken hold more firmly than ever of God's gracious favour in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Looking forward, we can but expect the same work to continue until every part of our faith-building is tried, and the wood, hay and stubble all consumed; for "the day that cometh (is now present) shall try every man's work of *what sort it is*." If in the past your building has stood the test and not been destroyed, rejoice; but still with trembling, remembering that the trial is not all over yet. "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." If there is in your building anywhere that which will not stand the test of fire, it must go—replace it quickly by that which will abide.

If there is anything lacking in your consecration — if in anything you have a will not surrendered to and harmonised with God's will—take heed to it, for He will discover it. If, as one of His jewels, you are being polished to radiate His light, take heed that in you there shall be no self-will, which as a grit might cause a flaw and mar your beauty and acceptableness with Him when making up His jewels.

It is not probable that trials, besetments, and difficulties, in the "narrow way" will be less in the year begun than in the one ended. The furnace gets hotter rather. Yet, let us remember that the greater our difficulties the greater the supply of "grace to help in every time of need," for which it is our privilege to call at: "the throne of the heavenly grace." Call to mind the words: "My grace is *sufficient* for thee," and, "Count it all joy when ye fall into temptations," knowing that if *exercised* thereby they will work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The past year has called for a bold reiteration of the truths which sanctify us, and yet are so often neglected in these days. By this ministry these precious truths are reaching out to other sheep of

the flock, who were famishing and ready to perish by the way for want of its sustaining power. Furthermore, these methods and exertions are being abundantly blessed, not only in feeding and refreshing the hungry, but also in the growth and development of those engaged. Every exertion in the Lord's service, and done *unto the Lord*, is sure to bring a compensating reward and blessing upon the heart of the labourer.

The year commenced offers fresh opportunities for sacrificing service of this kind. None should feel discouraged at opposition, and because few will believe our report. It is the few who have "an ear to hear" that we should expect to reach. If you at any time feel discouraged, call to mind the Master's experience. If the majority of those claiming to be God's people heard His words you might expect them to hear yours; but if the majority rejected His words they will reject yours also. If they have called the Master Beelzebub, what more should we expect? It is *sufficient* that the disciple be *as his Lord*. Then, with thanks for the past and present, and earnest prayer and confidence for the future, let us go forth with the whole armour of God girded on yet more securely, with the girdle of truth and trust; and grasping yet more firmly our shield of faith in His protecting care, and with the sword of the Spirit—His own word—in hand, let us fight a good fight until we finish the work given us, that we may be of those accounted worthy to enter into the joys of their Lord.

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In this day of rush and hurry and busy activity everywhere, if we are not careful, we shall allow ourselves to become too much absorbed in the doing even of right and proper things, to wait upon God. The strain of "going to it" may become infectious, and pass from mundane things to the spiritual sphere, and crowd the avenues of life with many things by no means bad. Good things can become injurious if they destroy that peace and quietude of the inner life, and make the child of Grace forget his God and Father.

Things are not necessarily done by rush and bustle. Spring glides in from day to day quite smoothly. The harvest matures without din and noise. The final conquest of evil comes "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Zech. 4: 6.)

## PROGRESS IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

The following summary is extracted briefly from some of the items in the Autumn 1956 issue of "Jews in the News", a quarterly digest which is a most informative periodical devoted to news of the re-birth of Israel. It can be obtained in this country on a regular subscription basis by post for 7/- per year from Bro. A. James, "Rehoboth", Woodford Bridge Road, Ilford, Essex. (4 Issues per year — 16 pages).

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En-ge-di is an oasis on the western side of the Dead Sea, famous in Biblical times for its fertility ("A cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-ge-di", Song 1, 14). For many hundreds of years now, and up to eight years ago, it had been a desolate wilderness; then reclamation was commenced. The springs of En-ge-di, flowing to waste into the Dead Sea during all those centuries, have been harnessed and their water flows through pipelines to irrigate the surrounding fields. The staple crop at present is tomato; plans are under way to grow many kinds of tropical fruits, for which the hot climate of the Dead Sea area, when coupled with the abundant water which is now available, is admirably suited.

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When the spies went in to search out the land they found it a country rich in vines and olive-trees, a land flowing with milk and honey. The cluster of grapes they brought back with them had to be carried on two men's shoulders. That old productiveness is fast returning in consequence of the labours of the Israelis. During 1955 Israel produced 18,000 tons of grapes, nearly twice as much as in 1954; 21,000 tons of olives, a sevenfold increase compared with 1954; a 200% increase in both wheat and barley, and eight million crates of citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit, etc.) of which three million came to Britain, the largest single buyer. Now after ten years' experiment it has been established that coffee, formerly a tropical product, can be grown successfully in Israel. At a "Fruits of Israel" exhibition held in Haifa there were on show 300 different kinds of fruit and vegetables, all grown in Israel, including a grapefruit as large as a football.

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Between 1951 and 1956 the area of land in Israel devoted to growing flax, used in many vital industries, has increased to twenty-five times that devoted to the purpose at the beginning of 1951.

The prophet Ezekiel promised that one feature of the land in the days of the Kingdom would be that "there shall be a very great multitude of fish" (Ezek. 47, 9). Fifteen years ago six carp were brought to Israel from Yugo-Slavia and put in a specially prepared fish pond. They have increased so rapidly that in 1955 alone 7300 tons of carp were put on the market, and there are 9000 acres of fish ponds producing ever increasing quantities of fish for food, all from those original six.

\* \* \*

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree" said the Psalmist. Tree-planting is a national habit in Israel. Since the establishment of the State in 1948 there have been twenty million trees planted, mostly pine and eucalyptus, largely intended for eventual cutting down for industrial purposes. A big timber industry is foreshadowed for Israel.

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The oil of the Old Testament was olive oil, but Israel has now struck oil in the modern sense. There are at present eight oil wells in operation, and it is predicted that by the end of 1957 there will be thirty-three. In ten years' time it is thought that the output of Israeli oil will reach five million barrels per year.

\* \* \*

"Who can count the dust of Jacob" cried Balaam, "and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" In his vision he saw the latter day restoration and beheld the multitudes that will inhabit the land. The present population of Israel is one million eight hundred thousand, one-thirtieth of the population of Great Britain. By 1965 it is anticipated that there will be two and a half million Israelis. Babies are being born in Israel five times as fast as people die there; for every one death in the country there are five new babies. One is reminded of the rapid increase of Israel when Jacob went down into Egypt; between two and three million came up again to go into the Promised Land to possess it.

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Our time is not our own if we have consecrated all to God; and consequently, we have none to spare for the investigation of fanciful false theories, built upon other foundations than that laid down in the Scriptures; nor have we time to devote to the ideas and pursuits which engross the world's attention.

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## WHAT DOETH THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE

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*"What doeth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. 6, 8).*

And is this all that the Lord really asks; to manifest these three virtues and to live a life in which they are exemplified and practised? When the final reckoning comes to be made, and it is said of a man that he was just, and good, and humble, will God be satisfied? Do the high standards and self-denying demands of the High Calling of this Gospel Age come down at last to no more than this?

It is even so—but it is that the standards and conditions of our calling reach up to these three demands, and until we have learned, and well learned, all that is involved in Balaam's exhortation, we shall not have measured up to the likeness our God has set before us.

We know nothing of the circumstances under which these words were originally uttered. How they came to be preserved for nearly a thousand years, then to be quoted by the prophet Micah, we do not know either. Micah accredits them to Balaam, and all that we know of Balaam is that he was a prophet of God although a Gentile, that being hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel he blessed them instead, and that having fallen into the hands of the Israelites he was put to death by them. This wonderful utterance shows a side to his character which otherwise would be quite unsuspected. *"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good"* he says, as if he but reminds us of what we already know perfectly well, something that God has manifestly and admittedly shown us already. And that is the first keen truth that comes home to us. *We do know these things.* We have enough of the original law written in man's heart to realise that justice, goodness and unselfishness are fundamental in human relations and that without them we cannot make progress toward the Heavenly city. God has shown us that and inwardly we know it. We might do very well by writing in our hearts the one line *"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good"* for in calm, quiet reflection upon those nine words there is a wealth of spiritual instruction. The Israelites of old were treated as servants and given a code of laws in which every crime and penalty was clearly defined, and, as the writer to the Hebrews says of that law "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward"; we who are of the New Creation are treated

as sons, as men and women whom the Father trusts to work out the Divine law for themselves on the basis of certain cardinal principles which He has laid down, and hence we do need calmly and quietly to think out the implications of those principles.

Justice has become a harsh, unyielding word to us in the English language, calling up visions of transgressors having meted out to them the due of their deeds. Of course the true idea behind the word is that of rightness, or righteousness. The man who takes into account all that is due to his God, his fellow-man, and to his own self, and renders to all the due that is theirs, is a righteous and a just man. This involves a sober recognition of the purpose of God in creating man and placing him upon the earth, and a willing taking up of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen of earth. Those who have consecrated their lives to God and become footstep followers of Jesus Christ, have the added duties and responsibilities of that calling to consider. These have entered into a family, the brethren of Christ, and there are family obligations to be honoured. How many there are who look upon the fellowship solely from the doctrinal angle and fail to realise that it is a brotherhood which has its basis upon things far deeper and more potent for good than mere intellectual understanding of God's Plan? There are many who are very correct in doctrine but have utterly failed to appreciate and honour the family relationship which must exist between those who hope ultimately to "reign with him".

This first principle, then, must be understood along the lines of righteousness; not a cold, austere, "holier-than-thou" righteousness the possessor of which thanks God that he is not as other men; not a bigoted, rigid cast of mind which sees nothing save its own narrow conception of the Divine dealings; but a warm, generous, zealous attitude of heart which manifests itself in a constant endeavour to maintain the highest ideals of faith and conduct before men, a refusal to compromise those standards under any circumstances, and a firm conviction of the rightness of God's ways and the certainty of their eventual triumph that nothing can shake.

Our consecration to Divine service does not absolve us from our Christian duty to our fellow-men. Rather it intensifies that duty. We are not of the world, but we are in the world, and whilst so we cannot escape the obligations which properly

devolve upon us as God's representatives in the world. The monastic form of life which involved a complete separation from ordinary affairs and ordinary people was a retreat and an escape from the principle that all created things were inherently sinful and corrupt and that withdrawal from them, and a physical mortification of the flesh, was pleasing to God. All this is wrong, for God Himself is the Author of creation and what He made, He made very good. Paul's words regarding the mortifying of the flesh were intended to teach and inculcate quite another truth, one that was perhaps best enshrined in the words "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12, 24). The Church of this Age is called to suffer and die in Christ that, like Him, they may be sown for the bringing forth of fruit, new life, in the coming Age amongst mankind. Lights in the world, bread of life, salt of the earth, every Scriptural illustration we have shows the intimate contact of the Christian with the world in which he lives, and yet his essential separateness from it.

It is thus that he learns to love mercy. Goodness, benevolence, kindness, cannot be attained by reading about them in a book — even though that book be the Bible. They are essentially practical virtues, and a man becomes a good man, a kind man, a benevolent man, only by means of his dealings with his fellows. To love mercy therefore implies a desire to practise mercy and this in turn leads to a way of life which finds scope for the practice of the desire. There is so much opportunity for the exercise of goodness to-day and it is not limited to those possessing money or outstanding talents. The Christian commission to "bind up the broken-hearted" is one aspect of "loving mercy." One may very conceivably do more good to a sad soul by giving assurance of the coming Kingdom than by a present of money. Sympathy and friendly compassion may upon occasion be more sorely needed than food or clothing. The word in season, the helping hand, the friendly endeavour to lighten a burden whether in a spiritual or a material connection are evidences of the attitude that God requires of us, that we "love mercy."

"Pure religion and undefiled before God" says James "is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Once again there is that intimate association with practical Christian endeavour toward the distressed of this world and separateness from the world that is the hall-mark of the instructed Christian. Moving among these people, ministering to their distresses, but not of them, professing and

manifesting a citizenship which is not of this earth, this is experience that will stand us in good stead when the time comes to turn the "pure language" to all people and teach them to call upon the name of the Lord with one consent.

These things are duties toward man. We have also, and of supreme importance, our duty toward God. "Walk humbly with thy God" said Balaam. Can we amplify his words to include that life of reverence and worship which must be ours if we would eventually see His face? "He that abideth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" said the Psalmist. All our right doing and goodness will avail us nothing if it is not lived in "reverence and godly fear". Above all our outward activities we must place the importance of the inner life, that life which finds its all in complete consecration and submission to God. Our behaviour towards our fellows will bring us rich lessons of experience that are necessary to our future work, but our dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will show us the Divine character and transform our minds and hearts into a copy likeness of His Son. Unless we have attained that likeness all the benefit of life's experiences will have been lost so far as our High Calling is concerned. Many there are, claiming with justice to have performed many wonderful works in His name, who will nevertheless be rejected from among the number of the triumphant Church. We must diligently follow after those things which will increase our perception of the inward life of the Spirit if we would truly come to know as well as worship God in spirit and in truth.

The active, businesslike, "practical" Christian often finds this a hard thing. There is so much to be done in active service, so many opportunities of preaching the message, so much of distress and suffering to be relieved, and he, by nature and temperament well fitted to undertake such labours, is very apt to give insufficient time and thought to that calm, quiet, leisurely communion with God in the things of the spirit that comes so much more easily to less active souls. He does not realise his loss, until, it may be, the failure of his activities, or disappointment at their outcome, awakens him to realisation of the things he is missing. In all our activities let us always leave room for walking "humbly with God."

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"Intolerance has had a very successful career, and it looks like having a brilliant future, but it has nothing to do with Christianity." ("Dick" Sheppard)



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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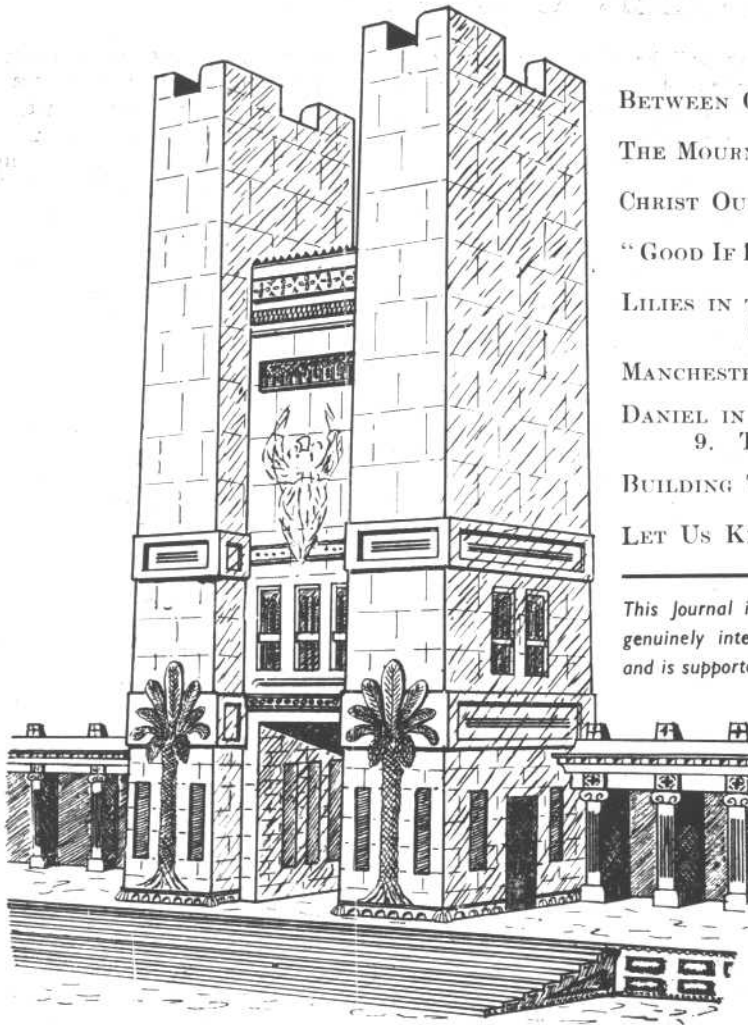
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

### BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Memorial of our Lord's death will be observed this year in the evening of Sunday 14 April. May those who gather at that time do so with the firm conviction that all for which we look will surely come to pass; there will indeed be a Kingdom of light and gladness which shall bring the desire of all nations, the fruit of that which took place in Judea nearly two thousand years ago. And for us who wait with patience for the promised union with Him beyond the Vail, let there be the quiet confidence that He is working all things together so that His every good word will be fulfilled "in due time".

\* \* \*

The booklet "*Israel has a destiny*", mentioned in our last issue, can be obtained for 6d. per copy or 5/- per dozen (class secretaries, complimentary copy free on request) from Associated Bible Students, 3 Ingram Close, Stanmore, Middlesex. Please do not apply to Lyncroft Gardens for this booklet as we have no stock and are not the distributors.

\* \* \*

The usual London Convention arranged by various London classes is again planned for this year, and will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, over the August Bank Holiday period, commencing on Saturday afternoon and continuing until Monday afternoon. Details can be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Cottage, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks.

\* \* \*

A certain amount of duplication of effort and delay is occasioned by some brethren sending "*Herald*" renewals to us instead of to the "*Herald*" representative in this country, Bro. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex. We always forward such subscriptions on to Bro. Allbon, but this involves unnecessary postage and some delay in the

acknowledgment being sent back to the remitter; and we would therefore ask brethren to take care that they send their "*Herald*" subscriptions direct.

It will also help the smooth running of our work if friends will note that 24 Darwin Road, Welling, is now the address for editorial and publishing matters but not for general correspondence or renewals and donations. All such should be sent to Lyncroft Gardens. If "*B.S.M.*" renewals are sent to Welling there is delay again in sending them to Lyncroft Gardens to be dealt with and acknowledged.

\* \* \*

A neat little reprint of the well-known booklet "*What say the Scriptures about Hell?*" is available free of charge on request to the Pastoral Bible Institute, 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38, N.Y., U.S.A. The booklet is one of 35 pages in stiff card cover and would slip easily into the pocket.

\* \* \*

From time to time we like to remind our readers that suitable literary contributions to the pages of the "*Monthly*" are always welcome, and that we are glad to consider any such which may be submitted for possible publication. Such articles should of course, be of the type which the "*Monthly*" normally puts before the friends, and anyone who takes advantage of the opportunity to submit them would be well advised to take careful note first of the general nature of the contents of the "*Monthly*". Articles may be expository, devotional, exhortatory, evangelical, and should in all cases be written against the background of the faith which our fellowship was created to promulgate. In general any one article or instalment of a series should be limited to not more than 3000 words. Such contributions should be sent to Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent, and NOT to Lyncroft Gardens.

## THE MOURNING OF HADAD-RIMMON

A Looking Forward to a Greater Passover

*"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son . . . In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."* (Zech. 12, 10-11).

The twelfth chapter of Zechariah's prophecy embraces, when the allusions are understood, one of the most beautiful visions of the establishment of the Kingdom ever penned. The setting is in that time when Israel's restoration is complete, the Ancient Worthies have returned from the grave and assumed control of affairs, the evilly disposed nations of the earth have ranged themselves to do battle against the Holy Land, and God has come out of His place to deliver His ancient people. The last four verses of the chapter describe a great outpouring of the spirit of grace and of supplication upon the people, their turning to God in repentance, and a great mourning which, likened to that of Hadadrimmon, is the occasion for cleansing from sin.

Verse 10 is often misquoted by evangelical Christians "they shall look upon *him* whom they have pierced" and used as a "proof-text" that the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent will appear to all men in His pre-crucifixion body, exhibiting the wounds inflicted on the Cross. The careful student will realize at once that this is not the meaning of the passage at all. It is God Who is speaking, Who in this chapter declares His intention of defending His people, and says "They shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced." The word for "pierced" is *dakar*, meaning "to thrust through," and alludes to the piercing of the Father's heart by the unfaithfulness and waywardness of His chosen people. "Upon me" is not the happiest translation—"toward me" is much better, the Hebrew word being a preposition signifying motion toward a place, or used of the turning toward a thing. Hence the idea here is that of the people upon whom the spirit of grace and of supplication has been poured turning and looking toward the God Whom they had forsaken.

It is true that in John 19, 37 the Apostle quotes this Scripture in reference to the death of Jesus upon the cross; but he is not quoting it as a prophecy of that event, but rather as an application of an appropriate Old Testament phrase. The word "*him*" does not appear in the Greek. John's words

are "*They shall look unto whom they pierced*" which is a correct Greek translation of the Hebrew text of Zech. 12.

It is with this understanding in mind that we consider this "great mourning as for an only son." It should be noted that although the people "look to *me* whom they have pierced," it is said that they "mourn for *him*, as one mourneth for an only son" (vs. 10). The immediate allusion here is to the rejected shepherd of chap. 11, vs. 13-14, who had been valued by Israel at thirty pieces of silver. Now in chap. 12 Israel is pictured as having turned toward God, Whom they had pierced in rejecting His shepherd, and mourning for that shepherd as for an only son, a firstborn. The symbolic application to our Lord Jesus is obvious. It would seem that this entire passage refers to that time when restored Israel turns to God, and accepts Jesus Christ as their Saviour and King.

This is where the "mourning of Hadadrimmon" becomes a picture fraught with spiritual meaning once the import of the allusion is understood. Expositors have had a great deal of trouble with this verse; it is usual to suggest that the reference is to that great mourning which took place in Judah upon the death of good King Josiah at the Battle of Megiddo nearly two centuries before Zechariah's day (2 Chron. 35, 24-25). It is surmised that Hadadrimmon must have been the name of the precise spot in the valley of Megiddo where the battle took place, but there is no knowledge of any such place and no evidence that any district or village bearing the name of Hadadrimmon ever existed. Rummaneh, near the site of the ancient Jezreel, is pointed to as having a somewhat similar name, but the similarity is more apparent than real. It is the writer's conviction that the allusion to the mourning of Hadadrimmon has reference to something of much more immediate import to Zechariah's people than the events surrounding King Josiah's death several generations previously. It referred, in short, to the annual commemoration, maintained by Semitic peoples for over three thousand years, of the death and resurrection of the pagan god Tammuz or Adonis.

What is called the Tammuz-Adonis myth is nearly as old as history. Its influence was widespread over Western Asia, and allusions to it are scattered here and there in the Old Testament. Mothers told the story to their babes and fathers to their sons; how

that, in the dim long ago, the youthful god Adonis, as he was known in Palestine and Phoenicia, or Tammuz, as he was called in Babylonia, was slain by a wild boar in a dense forest, and went down into the netherworld, cut off in the bloom of his youth. At his going the world went dark; the sun hid itself, the trees and vegetation withered, and flocks and herds dwindled and died. In the face of this calamity, the goddess Ishtar (Venus), who loved Adonis, descended into the underworld to implore permission for the Divine Son to return to earth. Leave being granted, Adonis was raised to life, the earth bloomed and blossomed forth once more in the power of the new life he brought with him, and there was great rejoicing among the sons of men.

Fantastic and meaningless as the story may appear to be, the serious student cannot help but observe how parallel it runs to the story of One Who, at a much later time in history, truly did suffer a violent death, descend into *Hades*, and was raised again by the Holy Spirit, the Divine power of God, to reappear upon earth bringing new life to men. There is sufficient likeness here to make the subject worthy of exploration.

Once every year, from long before the time of Abraham until the tenth century of our own era—shortly before the time of William the Conqueror—the Babylonians and all the peoples of Canaan held a great “mourning” to commemorate the death of Adonis. In northern Palestine the native tribes—and, alas, many Israelites also—watched for the time (the springtime), when the waters of the river Adonis ran red, due to the red earth of the mountains being washed down to the sea. That, said they, was the blood of the slain god, and immediately the great mourning was raised. Women, their hair streaming behind them, ran about weeping and crying. Images of the dead god were carried in procession and thrown into rivers or into the sea. The shepherds took up their reed pipes and sang their laments over the departed deity, how that with his passing the fields would dry up and wither and their flocks languish and die. In the towns and within the temples ceremonial mourning was instituted, and all the land was given up to the universal lamentation.

Then came a day—usually the sixth day of the ceremony—when the note was changed. *Adonis is not dead—he is risen!* That was the cry which resounded through the streets and across the fields. The citizens decorated their houses and took offerings of flowers and fruit to their temples. The reed pipes of the shepherds played joyful strains and even the lambs and kids seemed to share in the general rejoicing. *He is not dead; he is risen; and now new life will come to us all.* That was the

note upon which this pagan festival ended, year by year, on the mountains of Lebanon and in the valleys of Galilee and Megiddo.

And that is why the prophet Zechariah, searching for an illustration fitly to picture that great expression of national sorrow for the tragedy of the past, and national joy for the Lord's resurrection and His return to bring new life to the world, which will arise “in that day,” was guided by the Holy Spirit to liken it to the “mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.” *Hadad* is the Aramaic “Adad”—mighty Lord—and *Rimmon* a local name for Adonis. Reference to this name of the god in this same district is made in the story of Naaman the Syrian, who besought Elisha's indulgence when he went into “the house of Rimmon” (2 Kings, 5, 18). Ezekiel refers to this same commemoration when in his vision he saw the idolatrous women of Israel “weeping for Tammuz” at the north gate of the temple (Ezek. 8, 14).

Jesus, as a youth, must often have witnessed this festival. He had but to wander a few miles from his home in Nazareth, into the mountains northward, to find Himself surrounded by ruins of pagan temples and relics of ancient faiths. There in those wild districts where Israelite, Phoenician and Syrian had lived side by side for centuries, the old shepherds must have told the boy Jesus the story of Adonis, and pointed to the bright red anemones growing in profusion everywhere, telling Him that they were the drops of blood falling from the dying god. The boy Jesus knew these stories for the fables that they were; but in them He might have seen some foreshadowing of a day soon to come when He Himself was to be taken by wicked hands, crucified and slain (Acts 2, 3) and then, beyond that still, a far-off time when, amidst the rejoicings of all the world, Israel's Messiah would come in glory and power to bring life eternal to a dying and despairing world. And if, in fact, He did one day stand aloof and watch the multitudes wailing and lamenting the death of Adonis, that memory might well have been in His mind when at a later date He said to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24, 26).

“*And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David . . . the house of Nathan . . . the house of Levi . . . the house of Simeon*” (see margin) (Vs. 12-14). This passage is eloquently expressive of the universal character of this mourning. Every family in the whole land shall mourn, and that nation-wide sorrow, ascending to Heaven, will unlock the doors of Heaven's blessings. The prophet seems to have introduced four well-known names as representative of the nation;

David, the symbol of the ruling powers "in that day," leading the lamentation: Nathan, as symbolic of the prophetic fraternity, the seers (Nathan was the prophet of King David's time): Levi, the progenitor of Israel's priesthood, and head of the tribe which throughout Israel's history served in the things of God: Simeon, the materialistic, ruthless man of the world, an apt representative of "the people". King, prophets, priests and people, all will join together in this great mourning which at the last is turned into joy when restored, delivered, converted Israel will realise that the long looked for Kingdom has indeed come and that the law of the Lord is about to go forth from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2, 3). It is then that the concluding verse of this vision has its fulfilment (chap. 13, 1). "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." That fountain is the beginning of the flowing of the river of water of life (Ezek. 47, 1-12; Rev. 22, 1-2) and its blessings come first to the earthly missionary nation, gathered in the Holy Land, and from thence stream out into all the earth.

That is the climax of this great mourning. Just as, in the mourning for Adonis, the people cast away their sackcloth, ceased their lamentation, and came together with singing and rejoicing because the time of life had come, so "in that day," will it be true,

in the words of Isaiah, that "*the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away*" (Isa. 51, 11). The day of eternal life shall have come, and "*the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*" (Isa. 60, 20).

This, then is what Zechariah saw, and was inspired to write. In his day, the fulfilment of the golden words was still in the far distant future; nevertheless he knew that it would surely come. The mourning for Adonis has passed with the worship of Adonis into the place of forgotten things. But the purposes of God are working themselves out, and to-day we can see the beginnings of those events which shall culminate in the spectacle of a nation, conscious of a great peril but conscious also of a great destiny, having its blindness turned away and turning to seek the Lord in sincerity and truth. And in that day there shall be a great mourning in the land, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon, but that mourning shall be turned into joy, and in that joy shall all families of the earth have their share, and, like Israel themselves, come to join themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

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## CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION

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"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom. 3, 35).

The thought behind this word "propitiation" is that of a means of blotting out sin, not that of conciliating an offended Deity, the idea upon which much erroneous Christian theology has been built. To our English minds this fact does not come so easily as it did to the first readers of Paul's epistle to the Romans, for when their eyes fell upon the word "*hilasterion*", which has been translated "propitiation", they thought instantly of the "mercy-seat" in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and so of Christ as being set forth a "mercy-seat" — a means of covering sin and reconciling man with God.

When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, several centuries before Christ, the translators were faced with the problem of finding a suitable Greek word to describe the "mercy-seat". They chose "*hilasterion*", which was the word for an altar or other means of offering sacrifices to appease or placate the pagan gods of Greece. This Greek

translation, the Septuagint, was the one in general use in the time of Paul, and he would naturally use the same term, which is quite correctly translated "propitiation" in English. In a similar fashion, centuries later, the first English translators of the Hebrew Bible adopted "mercy-seat" to express the Hebrew "*kapphoreth*" because, as it is quaintly expressed in one early rendering "There God appeared mercifully unto them; and this was a figure of Christ".

Now "*kapphoreth*" means simply and solely a place of covering, and the "mercy-seat" was so named because the sins of Israel were "covered" by the annual sprinkling of the blood of the sin-offering. "*Kaphar*"—to cover—is not used in the sense of putting a roof on a house or a hat on one's head, but it is a word which implies the absolute obliteration of that which is covered. It means, primarily, to paint an object with pitch or bitumen, and is used in reference to an animal that is covered with a shaggy fur, or of the obliteration of writing by drawing the writing instrument completely over

the characters. Here are some examples of its use:—

Gen. 6, 14. "Thou . . . shalt *pitch* it (the ark) within and without with pitch."

Isa. 28, 18. "Your covenant with death shall be *disannulled*" (i.e., the written agreement or covenant shall be obliterated).

Prov. 16, 6. "By mercy and truth iniquity is *purged*."

It is this thought of covering, so as to obliterate completely, that lies behind the terms "reconciliation" and "atonement" in the Old Testament, for both these words are translated from "*kaphar*". Thus we have:—

Lev. 8, 15. "To make *reconciliation* upon it" (the brasen altar).

Dan. 9, 24. "To make *reconciliation* for iniquity."

Ezek. 45, 17. "The meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make *recon-*

*ciliation* for the house of Israel."

Lev. 16, 6. "And Aaron shall . . . make an *atonement*."

Lev. 16, 30. "On that day shall the priest make an *atonement* for you."

Ezek. 16, 23. "When I am *pacified* toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord."

And so God says (Isa. 44, 22) "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud . . . thy sins." When the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the bullock upon the "mercy-seat" on the Day of Atonement he was covering over and obliterating the sins of Israel from the sight of God.

There is perhaps, more of mystic truth than we have recognised in the lines of that familiar hymn:

"The Cross *now covers my sins,*  
The past is *under the blood;*  
I'm trusting in Jesus for all,  
My will is the will of my God."

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## "GOOD IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN"

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A word which has led many to maintain that there can be no possible hope for Judas is the somewhat cryptic statement made by Jesus and recorded in Mat. 26, 24: "*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.*" The argument is that if this be the case then there can be no expectation that the Millennial opportunity would be of any profit to Judas — he is already condemned as beyond hope of redemption.

The writer, reading in the "*Book of Enoch*" the other day, came across this same expression, and remembering that a number of our Lord's sayings, and those of some of the Apostles, reveal that they were intimately familiar with this book, which was in general use at the time of the First Advent, a clue to a possible reason for our Lord's allusion immediately presented itself. The passage in question is in 1 Enoch 38, where the appearance of Christ at his Second Advent for the judgment of the wicked is described. The Book of Enoch consistently refers to the Messiah as the "Son of Man" or the "Righteous One" and in this remark of Jesus at the Last Supper, he too used the expression "Son of Man." The Enoch passage is as follows:— "*And when the Righteous One shall appear before the eyes of the righteous, whose elect works hang upon the Lord of Spirits, and light shall appear to the righteous and the elect who dwell on the earth; where then will be the dwelling of the sinners, and where the resting-place of those*

*who have denied the Lord of Spirits? It had been good for them if they had not been born.*"

The meaning of the expression in this context is clear enough. When the Lord appears in glory and the faith of his true disciples is vindicated and honoured, where will the sinners and the apostates hide themselves in shame? Where will those who have denied their Lord go to conceal themselves from his searching gaze? In the strong hyperbolic language of the day, "It had been good for them if they had not been born" — an expression which does not mean that they were doomed to eternal death, but as though to say that rather than face the Lord they had denied or repudiated they would better not have been there at all, having never lived.

It might well be then that Jesus, talking to his disciples and Judas, was really quoting this verse from the Book of Enoch in order that Judas might recognise the allusion and thus be reminded that one day, in the day of the Lord's glory, he would be called upon to stand before the Lord he was now betraying, and experience the shame and confusion which in that day will be the portion of all who have rejected Jesus in this life. If this be indeed the source of the Lord's words — and the absolute identity of the expression coupled with Jesus' reference to himself as the Son of Man, a typically "Enoch" usage, seems conclusive evidence — then there remains no reason whatever to doubt that Judas, like all other sinful men, will benefit by the "Ransom for All" and be raised to the opportunity for life afforded by the Millennial reign of Christ for "all" who are in their graves.

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## **LILIES IN THE VALLEY**

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*The Poems of  
Rebecca F. Doney*

### **CHRIST, OUR PASSOVER**

In the dark night, when Egypt lay asleep,  
Forth went the angel, God's command to keep:  
Slay all the first-born, even from the throne,  
Down through the realm to the humblest home.

Swift was his work; and on the midnight air,  
Oh, what a cry of anguish, and despair  
Rose from the hearts of those in every home:  
God's word was sure; the last great plague had come

But in the homes of Israel, what a sight!  
Darkness without, in every dwelling, light.  
Clad for a journey; shoes upon their feet;  
With staff in hand, a solemn feast they eat.

Their father's God had heard their cries at last:  
His time had come; their bondage now was past;  
So in that night while Egypt mourned her dead,  
They ate the lamb with bitter herbs and bread.

But why this blood we see on every door?  
Why does the angel, seeing, pass it o'er?  
Israel's first-born in Egypt's danger shared;  
And only through that blood could they be spared.

Centuries passed; and still by God's command,  
Each year they slew, and ate the paschal lamb.  
Not that its blood could for their sins atone,  
But as a type of one that yet should come.

That sinless one, who, hanging on a tree,  
Bore all earth's sins, to set the prisoners free;  
That Righteous One, that perfect Lamb of God,  
Who for the world gave his most precious blood.

Our blessed Lord, with those whom he loved best,  
On that last night, sat down to keep the feast.  
"With great desire," he told his chosen few,  
"Have I desired to eat this feast with you."

"My heart is grieved; for I betrayed shall be  
By one of you, my chosen company."  
"Lord is it I?" each asked in trembling tone,  
"Nay, Lord, we'll die with thee!" cried every one.

But in great sorrow, still our Lord did say,  
"One shall deny; another shall betray;  
All be offended, and flee unto their own—  
But for my Father, I should be alone."

After the feast he took the Cup, and said  
"Drink ye of it; for you my blood was shed.  
I drink no more, until I drink with you,  
In that glad day, when we shall drink it new."

Then blessed the bread, and as each one did take,  
"This is my body, broken for your sake."  
Oft as ye drink this wine, and eat this bread  
Ye do show forth the suffering of your Head.

Bearing the whole world's load of guilt and shame,  
Knowing his own would soon deny his name;  
Knowing, by God, he would forsaken be,  
Thus our Lord went to his Gethsemane.

And still that sacred feast down through the years,  
Thy saints commemorate with holy tears.  
Keeping the words of him, who said, "This do  
In mem'ry of my dying love for you."

In this dark night, Lord, we, thy first-borns meet,  
With staff in hand and shoes upon our feet.  
Thy precious blood is sprinkled on our hearts;  
Thy broken body life to us imparts.

Come, dearest Lord, and bless us while we feast;  
Around this board, be thou our honoured Guest.  
We eat, and drink, and here our vows renew;  
Oh to our vows, Lord, keep us ever true!

All earthly hopes and joys, behind us lay;  
Lord, we would walk with thee, the narrow way.  
What is earth's joys and what its glittering dross?  
We gladly leave it all for thy dear cross.

Thy matchless sacrifice doth us afford,  
A chance to share thy sufferings, dearest Lord.  
Broken with thee, we claim this privilege rare,  
That in thy joys we may obtain a share.

On this Atonement Day, we would lay down  
Upon the altar, Lord, beside thine own,  
Our sacrifice; it is so very small;  
Take, Lord, and offer it; it is our all.

Day after day, our testings, Lord, increase:  
This side the veil, we know they must not cease.  
Scourging, or sword, or flames, whate'er it be,  
Help us, dear Lord, in our Gethsemane.

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Now onward, ever onward, from strength to strength  
we go,  
While grace for grace abundantly shall from His  
fulness flow,  
To glory's full fruition, from glory's foretaste here,  
Until His very presence crowns our happiest new  
year.

*F. R. Havergal*

## MANCHESTER NEW YEAR CONVENTION

### Part I

The Manchester Bible Students Convention was held on January 5 and 6 this year at Rusholme Public Hall. There was a goodly number of brethren, on Saturday over 80 being in attendance and on Sunday roughly 110. They came from a wide radius and from as far as London. The Chairman, Brother Halton, welcomed the brethren and trusted that all might be blessed and partake of the feast provided. He mentioned that although among all those present there were bound to be slight differences of thought, all were one in the main things and the spirit of love.

Bro. Guy (*Forest Gate*) was the first speaker. His subject was "*We preach Christ.*" He commenced by quoting Tennyson, who showed that 'Nothing walks with heedless feet', so of all the millions of humanity we were guided to God, for "the steps of a righteous man were ordered by the Lord", and we have the privilege of knowing God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Many are the devious ways by which we have come but all were guided by the Lord's drawing power. We have all learned many lessons, but the chief is personal knowledge and love of Jesus Christ — "*If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me.*" No man ever taught this quality of love — "*Lovest thou me?*" and only those who have this love can be shepherds and "Feed my lambs." This love is the great essential. This quality reaches the heart; to lord it over God's people and teach merely doctrine might reach the head but not the heart.

He then went on to show that there must be a sense of guilt or sin before we really feel the need of Christ, like a sick man and a physician. In this way Christ is our wisdom, to show us our need, and the Way. Many come to the Truth because of the beautiful thought of restitution; but without the removal of sin and the realisation of the cost, for Jesus tasted death for all, the truth cannot enter. (Heb. 2, 9).

Many have a knowledge of the Plan and the Truth, but until the truth is in us it is merely head knowledge. As in 1 Cor. 13, 1-3, Paul shows that all faith, all knowledge, all power of discoursing on the truth, and the giving of all we have, even to our lives, without the real love, are useless, like the scaffolding which is merely a preparation for the main building and afterwards removed. "Ye are the temple of God" — "God is love" — the temple is where God dwells and when love enters, doctrine takes a secondary place.

God has adapted Christ to our needs — our wisdom — Divine wisdom — to condemn all in Adam. All saved in Christ; He was made our righteousness. He met the demands of justice, "*He ever liveth to make intercession for us.*" Jesus is never too busy, — strong yet gentle — sanctifying — maturing — mellowing us.

We must press forward toward the mark — there is no time for anything else; do not let us lose our first love.

After tea on Saturday, Bro. Hartley (*Burnley*) spoke on "*A measure.*" He began by quoting Matt. 7, 21. "Not every one that saith unto me 'Lord, lord' shall enter the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

We are living in perilous times, because men are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. There are legitimate pleasures, but having this treasure in earthen vessels, we keep the body under.

He said that there would rise up amongst us wolves in sheep's clothing. Let us beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. However, no evil can befall us spiritually; let us continue to watch and pray.

No one can hurt God but they can hurt Him through His children—"Why persecutest thou me?" said Jesus to Saul (Paul).

"Three spirits like frogs" shall deceive all nations, yea, the elect if it were possible. Let us not fail in Christian virtues. "Behold I come as a thief." "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (Rev. 16, 15).

He went on to show that "We must be like Him for we shall see him as He is." This is not easy to attain, but we must follow the patterns of Jesus and Paul.

The children of Israel were tested in the wilderness (Deut. 8, 2) but the test now is to see if we love *Him*.

The test will go on, and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; even many brethren fear at these times.

At 6.45 Bro. French (*Forest Gate*) spoke on "*The Glory of the Kingdom of God.*" He said Satan is the god of this world but only so far as it served God's purpose.

Wherever God dwells, that is heaven. Man had to be reconciled to God, not God to man — a propitiation required by God. Satan's power is to be abolished — the bruising of the serpent which

has been the principal of all nations since Noah's time is to end at the beginning of Christ's reign. God made a covenant with Abraham, and with Moses at Sinai. He said to Samuel "They have rejected me." (God was represented by the Shekinah light in the tabernacle) — He was their king.

Later God made a covenant with David. (2 Sam. 7, 8-16 and Ps. 89). Jesus was David's son, "Thy will be done on earth." In Nebuchadnezzar's image the stone which struck it grew and covered the whole earth — thus the kingdom of Israel was an earthly kingdom.

Matt. 13, which treats of the call of the Church, in no way repeals the original purpose of God.

The real kingdom will not be established in its entirety until Jesus hands the kingdom back to the Father.

On May 15th, 1948 the state of Israel was born — other nations are claiming Abraham as father — there are many tongues in Israel to-day. Ezek. 36, 37, 38, 39, all point to the rising of Israel and of Gog, the power of Satan operating through Magog.

Jesus manifested His glory when he changed water into wine (John 2, 11); also when Lazarus was raised; so God will manifest His glory when we see the kingdom established and all the dead arise in the general resurrection (John 11, 40).

(To be concluded).

## DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

### 9. The Ancient of Days

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit." (Ch. 7, vs. 9).

One of the most pregnant sentences in the whole of the Bible! Into those few brief words Daniel infused all the longing and all the hopes and all the faith which had sustained him through so many years. One day God would arise in judgment, and then all for which the righteous had waited would be theirs. The long captivity of man to the dominion of sin and death, his long submission to oppressive evil powers, would be at an end, and the saints of the Most High would possess the kingdom, and rule in equity and justice for ever and ever.

This, the second part of the dream, leaves the actors in the first part still standing on the stage. The four beasts are still there; the fourth, strange and terrible, the latest to rise, dominating the other three certainly, but all four are still there. And now Daniel perceives a gathering tumult in the heavens. The sable curtain of night is lightning; a vivid golden radiance is banishing the blackness. The dark night-clouds turn dimly red and then break out suddenly into blazing cascades of fire, pouring down upon the earth and swelling into a fiery river which threatens to bear away all obstacles in its course. From above that plunging, leaping curtain of light there appears a waving field of white, an army of angels, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousands upon ten thousands, winging their way fast to earth, growing more clear and more perceptible as each second passes. Then the roaring of the thunder, the vivid, searing lightning, and

behind those speeding angels a majestic Appearance before which Daniel must have prostrated himself in reverence and awe; he knew well that no man may look upon the face of God, and live. But presently a calm, heaven-sent confidence took hold of him and he looked up to see the Ancient of Days, in all the dignity of kingly power and all the purity of His awful holiness, seated upon His Throne of judgment. The Time of the End had come and the Judge was in His place, the Assizes of Heaven about to begin.

In those first few seconds before the vision passed again into the movement of action Daniel had time to see that there were other, lesser, thrones surrounding that upon which was seated the Supreme Judge, the Ancient of Days. It is not so stated in verse 9, but implied by later verses, (18 and 22), that those thrones were occupied by "the saints of the Most High" waiting to take their destined place in the whole sequence of activities and events that was to be associated with this imminent judgment. The force of this aspect of the vision is obscured by the usual English meaning of "cast down". "I beheld till the thrones were cast down" says the Authorised Version, and it is usually tacitly assumed that Daniel referred to the fall of earthly thrones and kingships at this Time of the End in consequence of Divine judgment. That is not what was intended. The term "cast down" in the original has the significance of being set down or placed firmly in position. This usage appears in the English word "cast" for making solid, firm objects from fluid materials, as in the case of

"cast" iron, an object made solid by "casing" from molten metal. The reference here in Daniel 7 is to judicial seats as in Psa. 122, 5, "For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David" and Matt. 19, 28, "Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." There is no suggestion anywhere in the Scriptures that the angels are assessors in the judgment; in the vision they are attendants upon the Ancient of Days but not occupants of the thrones, and the only reasonable view we can take of the vision is that Daniel saw the "saints of the Most High" seated in the presence of God and ready to play their own destined part in the drama of judgment. That fact should help considerably in placing the time of the fulfilment of the vision.

But as yet the saints on their thrones had no part to play. The focal point of the vision shifted again to the earth, to the earth before the Throne, where stood the four beasts of the vision. The books were opened and the judgment began; the fourth beast, the terrible, unnatural one, was first condemned, and before Daniel's fascinated eyes was slain and its body cast into the blazing river which still cascaded down from the glory of God and ran, a fiery torrent, away into the darkness of oblivion. The other beasts were not slain immediately; they were deprived of their dominion, but "their lives were prolonged for a season and time." Now this expression as it stands can be productive of misunderstanding, as though these three beasts were granted a kind of indefinite lease of life, whereas the truth is the reverse. The word "prolonged" in the Hebrew means to assign or cut off to a determined length. The expression "season and time" in the A.V. is based on the old English expression "till a time and tide", which was a phrase indicative of a fixed and irrevocable point of time which could by no means be exceeded (hence the English proverb "Time and tide wait for no man".) What Daniel tells us in verse 12, therefore, is that the fourth beast was slain at once and the other three, after being deprived of their dominion, sentenced to die at a certain fixed time not stated but already determined in the mind of the Judge.

Again the prophet's eyes turned heavenward. Somehow or other he realised in his dream that now was to come an important event in the sequence of happenings which he was witnessing, for at this juncture (verse 13) he repeats the expression, "I saw in the night visions" as though to mark this point with some special indication. Looking back at his words from the standpoint of our later Christian knowledge, the significance of this stage in the symbolism is clear enough, for in lifting up his eyes to heaven, Daniel saw "one like the Son

of man" coming "with the clouds of heaven." That expression is so familiar a one to Christians that we immediately think of the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ for the dual purpose of gathering His Church, and setting up the earthly Kingdom which is to be the desire of all nations; and that, not unnaturally, is the interpretation which is usually and immediately placed upon this verse in Daniel 7. The application seems so obvious that several discordant features are often overlooked, and it may come as somewhat of a shock to realise that the usual interpretation is not quite so fitting as is thought.

In the first place the saints are already, in the vision, seated on their thrones of judgment in the presence of the Ancient of Days, observing the execution of judicial sentence upon the four beasts, and this *before* the "Son of Man" appears with the clouds of heaven. In the second place this "Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven, does not descend to the earth but is brought into the presence of the Ancient of Days, to receive a royal investiture, and a kingdom. And in the third place — and this is important to a right view of the vision — the expression "the Son of man" in the A.V. is not a correct rendering of the original. Daniel actually said that he saw "one like a son of man", i.e. one like a human being, in contrast to the Deity above and the beasts below; this man-like being, then ushered into the presence of God and awarded the kingdom of the earth. The translators, reasoning back from their New Testament theology, rendered "*the Son of Man*" instead of "*a son of man*," forgetting that in Daniel's day the phrase "Son of Man" as applied to the Messiah was completely unknown and could have had no possible meaning.

Daniel, then, saw a man coming with the clouds of heaven, as contrasted with the raging sea which only brought forth beasts. Daniel and his people had no knowledge of the Messiah, no conception of a Son of God Who would exercise all power in heaven and earth as the active agent of the Father's purposes. The prevalent understanding of the Kingdom was that God Himself would intervene and destroy evil nations and all evil, and exalt His people Israel. It was for this that Daniel looked and prayed, and in the vision of the Ancient of Days he must have found his expectations fully realised.

This addition to the vision, therefore, this introduction of another being, one like an earthly man and yet coming from heaven, to receive and administer the Kingdom, started a new line of enquiry in Daniel's mind. This was something he had not

thought of before. Like others nearly six hundred years later he must have asked himself "Who is this Son of man?" That is probably the reason for Daniel's admission at the end of the account (vs 28) "*As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me . . . but I kept the matter in my heart.*" He began to perceive that there was going to be more in this question of the fulfilment of God's promise to overthrow evil and introduce everlasting righteousness than his studies in the Scriptures had until then revealed to him, and, devoted student that he was, he gave this new development serious thought.

We have the advantage, now, of seeing why the vision entered into this aspect. It was on the basis of this chapter and the picture of the relationship between the "Ancient of Days" who awarded the Kingdom and the "Son of Man" who received the Kingdom that our Lord assumed and used the title "Son of Man." It could have come from no other source and the Jews were aware of that fact. (The use of the same expression in the Book of Ezekiel is not in the same category; the Almighty habitually addressed Ezekiel as "Son of man" in allusion to the fact that he was, in fact, a human being, with no prophetic or symbolic implication whatever. The suggestion sometimes made that in the New Testament the Greek phrase is "the Son of the man" referring to Jesus' natural descent from "the man", Adam, is based upon misapplication of Greek grammar and does not deserve to be taken seriously.) When Jesus proclaimed Himself to be "the Son of Man" all who heard Him would instantly connect His claim with the vision of Daniel and understand His words accordingly. This is very clearly shown when in answer to the High Priest's question at His trial, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" He replied "*I am; and thou shalt see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*" (Mark 14, 61-62). That was the statement and the claim that sealed His fate; He had declared that He was the One seen by Daniel in the vision.

That the Jews of Daniel's day and immediately afterwards clearly perceived the vision to teach that one who in some manner was associated with men and made like man, yet a heavenly being, would thus stand in the presence of God and receive from His hands the Kingdom, is very evident. The Book of Enoch, written several centuries after Daniel's time, has much to say about the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days and that is a good guide to Jewish thought. The coming of the Son of Man to execute the Divine will in the days of the Kingdom was an accepted part of Jewish theology in the days of Jesus.

We are left, then, with the plain fact that in Daniel the coming of the Son of Man "with the clouds of heaven" takes place *after* the Ancient of Days has pronounced judgment on the beasts and *after* the "people of the saints of the Most High" have taken their places on their thrones to observe the execution of that judgment. As the chapter proceeds, we find that the kingdom, and dominion, is given to the "Son of man" and to the "saints" simultaneously. Both receive the kingdom; both rule and exert authority in association the one with the other.

In the reality it must be accepted therefore that New Testament references to the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven (such as Rev. 1, 5; Matt. 16, 64 etc.) must generally refer to a time after the Church has been gathered and after the kingdoms of this world have fallen and been destroyed. They must refer to the latest and most spectacular phase of the Second Advent, the commencement of the reign of Christ and the Church and His revealing to all mankind, the time that is sometimes spoken of as "the Kingdom in power." The appearance of one like a Son of Man in Daniel's dream symbolises the last event in the series of events which characterise the transition from the kingdoms of this world to the Kingdom of God, the period of the Second Advent.

So the vision ended where all such visions ought to end, in the light and glory of the Kingdom. The four wild and terrible beasts had been destroyed and obliterated; the raging sea had disappeared. As with John in Revelation "there was no more sea." In its place the powers of heaven had taken control of earth and the light and glory of the Son of Man irradiated the whole world and gave promise of the peace and joy that was to be. There is quite a close connection between this vision of Daniel 7 and that later one of the Apostle John in Revelation 19 and 21 in which, after the destruction of the beasts of the earth, the kings and their armies, and the disappearance of the sea, the New Jerusalem comes down to earth with the glory of God and of the Lamb to enlighten it.

There the ancient prophet left the matter. For two more years we hear nothing of him until, in the third year of King Belshazzar, he dreamed again. But this time the dream was not of distant golden days but of things near at hand. The empire of Babylon was nearing its end, and it was meet that Daniel be instructed in the events that were soon to come.

*To be continued.*

## **BUILDING TOGETHER WITH GOD**

An address by Bro. S. J. Arnold, Dayton, U.S.A., at 1929 Pittsburgh Convention

*"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved so as by fire."* (1 Cor. 3, 11-15).

Do you know that every individual Christian, who is striving to enter the Kingdom of God, is represented in the Scriptures as putting up a structure, a building, a faith structure, if you please, and that upon the kind of material we use in that building depends our future, whether for happiness, peace, contentment and reward; or sorrow, chagrin, disappointment and loss?

The Apostle first counsels us as to the proper foundation for our faith structure, stating that no man can lay a foundation that can bring us eternal life; because no man can give a ransom for his brother. No man can lay a foundation that can give a hope of future blessings.

Therefore, *"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Cor. 3, 11). This is in harmony with that other statement: *"There is no other name given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus only."* (Acts 4, 12).

But now, since Jesus is the proper foundation for our building, upon what does the foundation rest; what was it laid upon? All foundations must rest upon an underlying basis of some kind, and we reply by quoting our Lord's own words. He said He came not to do His own will but He came to do the will of His Father in heaven. And His Father's will was His Law, which is as eternal as God Himself; therefore Christ, the Foundation Stone, was laid upon the eternal principles of God Himself.

The Apostle uses very powerful symbolisms to represent the material we use in the construction of these buildings, namely, gold, silver, and precious stones. These symbolise those things in our faith that have the qualities of gold, silver and precious stones, qualities that are fireproof, qualities that fire will not burn; they are also rain and waterproof. Water is a symbol of Truth, and water will not

melt them, cause them to decay or wash them away. On the other hand, both fire and water will purify them and cause them to shine the more brightly, because they represent most beautiful truths. Gold represents Divine truths of the Kingdom; silver represents heavenly or spiritual truths of the Kingdom; precious stones represent the human or earthly phase of the Kingdom.

On the other hand, Paul uses wood, hay and stubble to represent speculations, theories and opinions of men, which have qualities corresponding to the qualities of wood, hay and stubble. These are plentiful and cheap; they are neither fire- nor storm-proof, but are subject to decay and destruction by both fire and storm. Therefore, the Apostle urges, "Take heed" what kind of material you are using in these faith structures, for we ourselves have to do with the kind of material we are using in our buildings. It is our building in the sense that we individually are responsible for the material we use.

God permits us to select the material, and He further permits us to supervise and arrange our entire faith structure. Nothing is forced upon us by God. He does say, however, through His mouth-piece, the Apostle Paul, *"Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."* But if we co-operate with Him, by using the materials he offers us and His advice in the selection of material, and labour together with Him, then He is pleased to have us call it "God's Building," for by so doing it gives us and our building a distinction and a reputation for first-class building and workmanship. *"For we are labourers together with God, ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."* (Verse 9).

The kind of building we erect all depends on the kind of material we use in the building, for no building is better than the material in the building. A building built of wood, thatched with straw, and covered with paint, may look fairly well, and its builder and occupant may for a while feel reasonably secure and contented. However, in the time of fire, rain or storm, the building will be almost certain to be damaged, if not altogether ruined or lost, with only the foundation remaining.

Similarly, a faith structure made up of uncertain theories, opinions, guesses and speculations of men, may be put together quickly, cost but little, and when glossed over with oratory and fine speeches, may look reasonably well so far as outward appearance is concerned and its occupant may feel quite satisfied for a time. But when the fiery experiences and the storms and floods of life come, the weak-

ness and undesirability of such a structure will be clearly manifest, resulting in sore disappointment and loss.

Therefore our future peace and happiness, or our chagrin and disappointment will be in proportion as we have been wise in making use of the good materials for our building, or unwise in the use of the wrong material.

God has the mine and the quarry (the Bible) and that contains all the materials for the best of buildings, the gold, silver and precious stones. God freely offers these materials to us for our building, if we will only spend our time and labour to dig them out of His mine and quarry. And for our helpfulness, God has provided the tools by giving us concordances, Bible dictionaries, histories, helps, teachers, for we could not have all these if God had not given them to us. And, still more, God has given us the blueprints in the "types and shadows" of His Law. He has laid before us the plans and the specifications, and urges us to build well; and he assures us that if we do so our structure will stand the test of the fire and the storm which will try every man's work. Upon the other hand, the cheaper and destructible materials will but feed the flames and result in utter disappointment and loss to its owner.

Now let us keep this in mind that all who build their faith structure upon the proper foundation, Christ's great redemptive sacrifice, are Christians, regardless of whether or not they are wise or unwise in the selection of material for their faith structure. If part or all of our faith structure is composed of the wood, hay and stubble of men's theories and speculations, we may be called very unwise or foolish virgins. The Apostle's word further declares: "*Every man's work shall be revealed, for the day shall declare it, of what sort it is.*"

God has arranged for trying experiences, symbolised by a fire and a great storm, which will be permitted to test the life-work of every man in the church so that it is but a question of time until every vestige of the wood, hay and stubble — the opinions, theories and speculations of men — everything that is of man and not from God, shall be destroyed.

But why all the destruction? We answer: God is building a city called "The City of God," "The Holy City," "The New Jerusalem," and all these buildings we are erecting, with their inhabitants who have passed the test of the fire and the storm, shall become a part of that city, and that city will be the Divine government. A city of gold, with streets of pure gold, with pearly gates and precious stones in its foundation, and its inhabitants with garments wrought with pure gold; therefore that which is represented by the wood, hay and stubble

can have no place in that city. Then how will all these tests be applied? Christ said, "*I am the Light of the world*"; and light is the enemy of darkness. The coming of light dispels the darkness. Darkness of error, superstition and men's opinions is giving way to light and truth, and will so continue until the world is cleansed of all human philosophies and speculations, as we read: "*His lightnings enlightened the world. The earth saw and trembled. A fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies round about. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.*" (Psalm 97, 3, 5).

Paul further tells us that these unwise or foolish Christians, because of the poor material used, will in this time of fire, suffer loss. What will they lose? They will lose their buildings, their faith structures, their cherished opinions and conceptions, concerning the Lord and His Plan, upon which they may have spent many days of toil and labour to put together. All will be shown to be false, without a Scriptural basis. And all hopes and ambitions resting on those unsound teachings and principles must go down also. Yet so long as they continue to remain on the rock-foundation, *CHRIST*, and give evidence of sincerity in the same, we are assured that they will be saved, "yet so as by fire."

While it is true that the gold, silver and precious stones are scarce and difficult to obtain, they are of great value, because of their inherent qualities which endure the fire and the storm. Since these materials symbolise the Truth, we observe the significance of their scarcity, and the fact that they are difficult to obtain and the necessity of digging for them as for hidden treasures.

The Wise Man says we should "*Buy the truth and sell it not.*" To "buy" means to pay a price; it must cost something to obtain it.

God's Truth, and the character which it serves to construct, can only be obtained at the expense of time, labour, inconvenience and self-denial. Also, to hold the Truth, after we have obtained it, is generally at the expense of reputation and the sacrifice of many earthly good things.

Those who build with the material symbolised by the gold, silver and precious stones are erecting a structure that will abide throughout all time; they are using indestructible material and proving themselves real overcomers of the world, the flesh and the adversary; for it is the Truth, and the spirit of the Truth, that enables the true Christian to stand firmly against all the enemies of God. It is the revelation of Divine Truth that supports faith in the hour of trial and when all earthly friends forsake us. Such overcomers "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and at last will be with Him, as the Bride of the Lamb, heirs of God and

joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord.

Those who build with the wrong material of wood, hay and stubble, of man's theories and speculations, though they are Christians and build upon the rock Jesus Christ, are most certain to be overcharged and overcome by the evil and worldly influences and forces all around them, because they have not a "Thus saith the Lord" for their faith. They depend upon the traditions of men; they lack the necessary protection from error, which Truth alone can give. Their strength is insufficient to overcome the world.

Again, there are some who build their hopes of acceptance with God, and of becoming heirs of the Kingdom, on the basis of their good works, or their wonderful works of service, and outward activity, to the neglect of the character within, which should be godlikeness. Such are surely building with poor material; their structure will not stand the final test which the Lord will apply. The good works, and the service in the ministry of the Word are all important enough, but Paul tells us that the Lord is pleased with all this only when it is the Love of God in our hearts causes activity for Him; saying "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.*" And further, the Apostle Peter tells us to add to our faith structure, Christian character such as Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness and Love; that, by so doing, we shall have granted unto us an abundant entrance into God's Kingdom. He says not a word about "service"; and while we do not want to minimise service, the Apostle emphasises the thought that Christian character is far more important and pleasing in God's sight than all the service we can render.

It is also interesting to observe the close connection between St. Paul's words on the subject of Christian work and the faith structure. Jesus, also, in the closing verses of His sermon on the mount, said: "*Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which buildeth his house upon a rock. And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone who heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the loss thereof.*" (Matt. 7, 24-27).

The lesson that Jesus intended to convey is that the truths He taught them were not merely to be heard, but to be put into practice in their everyday lives, if they would have the favour of God.

So Paul speaks of the Ransom when he speaks of Jesus as the foundation upon which we can build our faith. Our Lord, referring to Himself, said upon one occasion: "*Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Evidently, the Lord intended to convey the lesson that the truths He taught must be received into good and honest hearts, and incorporated into our lives, to the extent of consecration to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and thereby build up a faith-structure on the Rock foundation, against which no storms can prevail, and such builders He likens unto wise men.

Our Lord warns us against the mere hearing of His words, and not obediently receiving them into our hearts, and not conforming our lives thereto, by making them a part of our faith-structure. Such, our Lord says, are building upon the sand; such are not acting in accordance with our Lord's instructions; such are unwise and certain to suffer loss in the time of storm.

We are reminded, in this connection, that while God has committed to each one of His children the work of constructing a faith building and has lent His aid and providential care in the same, yet in another and much larger sense God is constructing a glorious edifice, the "Temple of God," typified by Solomon's Temple. The Tabernacle in the Wilderness, with its rough covering of badger skins, typified the Church in her humiliation while on this side the veil, while the Temple, on the top of Mount Moriah, typed the Church in glory, and each individual child of God is referred to as a stone in preparation for that Temple. So, the Apostle says, that Christians, as living stones, are built up into Him, a royal priesthood and a holy temple in the Lord. Following the various symbolisms of the Bible that refer to this matter, we find that this Temple, which God is erecting is, in other words, the Kingdom of God; the Divine Government, to whom will be committed the responsibility of the world's future sovereignty.

Therefore, throughout the Gospel Age, God's Building, or Temple, has been in process of preparation, in the sense that the material, the stones, and so on, are being dug out of the quarry of this world, and are undergoing the hammering, shaping and polishing of God's disciplinary providences, so that each one may take on the proper shape, and thus fit in the place designed by the Great Architect of that holy Temple.

Surely we are near the time for the finishing of this great Building of God, His Holy Temple; surely we are close to the time when the last of the Temple stones are receiving their polishing and finishing touches, and soon the Temple will be raised in the First Resurrection.

The world's great luminary, the Sun of Righteousness, "The Light of the World," is brightening the eastern horizon. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. May the light of God shine on and on increasingly until His Church, whose foundation is the "Rock of Ages," sha'l lift her meek and lowly head above the falling debris of earth's decaying systems and bid defiance to the storm which shall sweep the world of its vain schemes and traditions — its houses of sand, its castles of air; its wood, hay and stubble, the fabrications of man — until the Church, now in the wilderness, shall be the Church in glory.

How are we building? Are we building on the

"Rock of Ages", by hearing and heeding our Lord's instructions; or, are we building on the shifting sands by hearing and not conforming our lives thereto? And with what are we building? Are we building with the gold, silver and precious stones; or are we building with the wood, hay and stubble of human speculation and sophistry?

Let us consider well the material with which we are erecting our faith-structure, our character building, today! Are we certain we are building with the imperishable and eternal truths of God's Word; or are we at fault by permitting ourselves to delve into that which is human speculation, only to suffer loss, chagrin and disappointment?

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## "LET US KEEP THE FEAST"

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*Reflections  
for to-day*

The Last Supper was not the same thing as the Passover, although the ceremony and words used by Jesus on that occasion and which have given the inspiration for two thousand years of Christian celebration must have followed close upon, and indeed were probably intermingled with, the disciples' keeping of the Passover according to Mosaic law. It is not so much that the one ceremony was distinct from the other in point of time and sequence as that it was distinct in purpose. The Passover was a ceremony of tradition, looking back to a deliverance of fourteen centuries past; the Last Supper was the inaugural ceremony of a new fellowship, looking forward to a greater deliverance which was still two thousand years in the future. The one was a remembrance of the past, the other a pledge of the future.

We therefore, as we come together again as we have done, year by year, need to balance the future with the past. When Jesus said "This do in remembrance of Me" He surely meant us to remember, not only His life on earth and death on the Cross, but also His promised coming again in the glory of His Kingdom and His *apokulupsis* to all men when that Kingdom is established in power. Ours is not a faith which dwells forever on the things of the past, however soul-stirring and inspiring they may be, however mighty in Divine power for the furtherance of God's Plan. It is a faith that looks forward to the future, that beholds with clear, undimmed eyes those glories that shall be when the Son of Man has fully come in the power of His Kingdom, and all tribes and nations have gathered before Him to learn of the pure language that He will turn unto them, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one

consent. It is *that* coming which we have in mind as we raise the cup to our lips and repeat together "*Till He come!*"

There were eleven gathered with Him in that upper room. The others were not there—those who, besides the apostles, were constant attendants upon our Lord during His ministry. The three Marys, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Mark, were not there. Neither were Mary and Martha of Bethany, nor Joanna nor Salome. Neither was Lazarus, nor those secret disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus. The "five hundred brethren" to whom the Lord showed Himself after His resurrection were elsewhere, all unconscious of the ceremony that was being enacted for the first time and which they themselves would repeat, year by year continually, for the rest of their lives. It was in the truest sense of the word a family gathering, and it marked the institution of a new family, the Christian family, a family that was to hold together and endure, through centuries of suffering and persecution, until our own day; yea, and endures still. Despite all our misunderstandings, our difficulties, our disappointments and our disillusionments, we remain a family still, and those who have grasped this truth and practice it in their relations with the brethren are the ones who alone have remained truly faithful to the cause of "Present Truth."

It was appropriate therefore that the institution of the Christian family should be marked by a ceremonial which, whatever else it was intended to symbolise, did in fact bring home to the disciples one vivid realisation. They were to eat bread in the presence of their host! That meant a great deal more to those men in that day than ever it

means to we Western Europeans to-day. From time immemorial — yea, and even until to-day in the Arabian deserts—to eat bread in a man's house or in his tent in the land of the sons of Abraham meant that the host was forever bound to accept the eater as one of his family, even to the extent of sacrificing his own life if needs be in the defence of his guest. It was no idle word that Jesus uttered when He said "This is my body, broken for you. Take, eat." By that action He was assuring them, in symbol, that, having partaken of bread at His hands, they were forever under His protection and members of His family. "Greater love hath no man than this," said Jesus, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." He knew full well that He must lay down His own life on behalf of those who had eaten bread with Him, and in the earnestness of His communion with the Father He prayed that these who by this ceremonial eating of bread with Him had signified their desire to be of His family forevermore might be as one family whilst still in the flesh, "that they may be one, as we are one." We need to reflect here that to be one body in heaven means to be one family on earth; the unity for which our Lord prayed is not one to be achieved as it were instantaneously upon our "change" to spiritual conditions and our entrance upon heavenly glory, but is to be attained here and now in our fellowship together and our common pilgrim walk toward the Holy City. "The bread which we break," says Paul in 1 Cor. 10, 16 "is it not the communion—common union—of the body of Christ?" It is only as we enter into the real meaning of the term "communion of saints" that we can begin to perceive the basis of that fellowship which shall be our inheritance beyond the Vail but for which we must be prepared here and now if we are ever to inherit it.

The significance of the bread, then, to us, is His life given for us, our acceptance into His family, binding us together into one body. If we take the symbol to ourselves and partake of the broken bread, we must identify ourselves with that position.

But the eleven were to be initiated into an understanding even deeper than that. Not only were they to enter into a passive relationship as members of the Christ family but they were also to enter into an active partnership as blood-brothers with Jesus Christ Himself. He called them, not only to accept of His hospitality and sacrifice upon their behalf, but also to become associated with Him in a work of service which should make them for all time "joint-heirs with Christ—if so be that we suffer (endure) with Him, that we may also be glorified together." And so He bade them drink of the wine which was His blood.

The assimilating of blood meant the acquiring of blood relationship to the donor, to these men of the Eastern world. Two Bedouin Arabs, resolved to become blood-brothers to each other, would each open a vein in his wrist and the two together would allow their blood to mingle. From henceforth they were blood-brothers—each had the other's blood run in his veins. The drinking of blood, too, meant the acquiring of life from another. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you," said Jesus. Hence this symbol of the cup involved a second and deeper obligation, one more personal between each believer and his Lord. It implied eternal association together in as close a sense as two brothers are together. It implied a companionship with the beloved partner in all things, in life or in death. So if Jesus spent His life in serving mankind and doing good to all, so do we. If Jesus forsook earthly ambitions and aims in order to further the interests of God's Kingdom, then so should we. If Jesus went into death at the hands of wicked men rather than swerve one iota from the course which Divine wisdom had planned for Him, then we should be ready to do the same. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so ye also should walk in newness of life."

The symbol of the cup, then, is that of a voluntary sharing with Him in all that He does, both in the service of mankind now, limited in scope and power though it must be, and in the infinitely wider sphere of Millennial work when that Age shall have come. "Are ye able," asked our Lord of some who desired to reign with Him, "to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised?" "Lord, we are able," was the confident reply. They knew not what they said. So, often, in our confidence, we say the same thing and understand the implication of what we say as little as did those disciples. May we have grace and sincerity to enter more deeply into the spirit of these things, and, approaching the holy table with full awareness of our responsibility and privilege, let us "keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The story of Divine grace is the record of One who has been disposed to "give," and "give," and "give" again, because it pleases Him to dispense of His fullness to helpless needy men. He created man with a great "need" so that He might play the part of a great giver. Man has but to open his hand to take of that bountiful fullness which God opens His hand to give.



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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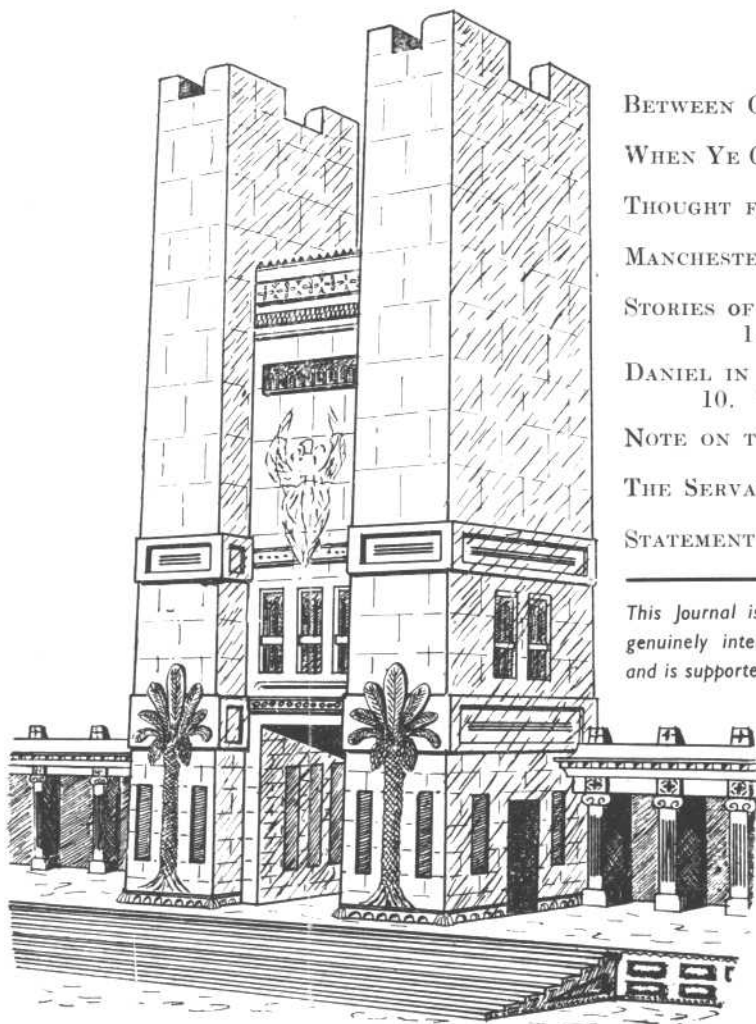
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge of the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

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It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

### BETWEEN OURSELVES

There will be found, set out upon the last page of this issue, the statement of accounts of the Bible Fellowship Union for 1956. Whilst the scope of our activities has been considerably reduced during the past few years, it is gratifying to realise that general appreciation of the "Monthly" is as well sustained as ever, and the voluntary gifts of interested brethren has enabled us to continue publication. We have so many letters of appreciation and commendation, and only an occasional one expressing disappointment or criticism, that we feel the "Monthly" is intended yet to continue for a space and those who jointly undertake the various labours involved feel that the work is still "not in vain in the Lord".

The booklet "*Israel has a destiny*", mentioned in our last issue, can be obtained for 6d. per copy or 5/- per dozen (class secretaries, complimentary copy free on request) from Associated Bible Students, 3 Ingram Close, Stanmore, Middlesex. Please do not apply to Lyncroft Gardens for this booklet as we have no stock and are not the distributors.

The usual London Convention arranged by various London classes is again planned for this year, and will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, over the August Bank Holiday period, commencing on Saturday afternoon and continuing until Monday afternoon. Details can be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Cottage, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks.

A certain amount of duplication of effort and delay is occasioned by some brethren sending "Herald" renewals to us instead of to the "Herald" representative in this country, Bro. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnyside Drive, Ilford, Essex. We always forward such subscriptions on to Bro. Allbon, but this in-

volves unnecessary postage and some delay in the acknowledgment being sent back to the remitter; and we would therefore ask brethren to take care that they send their "Herald" subscriptions direct.

It will also help the smooth running of our work if friends will note that 24 Darwin Road, Welling, is now the address for editorial and publishing matters but not for general correspondence or renewals and donations. All such should be sent to Lyncroft Gardens. If "B.S.M." renewals are sent to Welling there is delay again in sending them to Lyncroft Gardens to be dealt with and acknowledged.

A neat little reprint of the well-known booklet "*What say the Scriptures about Hell?*" is available free of charge on request to the Pastoral Bible Institute, 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38, N.Y., U.S.A. The booklet is one of 35 pages in stiff card cover and would slip easily into the pocket.

From time to time we like to remind our readers that suitable literary contributions to the pages of the "Monthly" are always welcome, and that we are glad to consider any such which may be submitted for possible publication. Such articles should of course, be of the type which the "Monthly" normally puts before the friends, and anyone who takes advantage of the opportunity to submit them would be well advised to take careful note first of the general nature of the contents of the "Monthly". Articles may be expository, devotional, exhortatory, evangelical, and should in all cases be written against the background of the faith which our fellowship was created to promulgate. In general any one article or instalment of a series should be limited to not more than 3000 words. Such contributions should be sent to Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent, and NOT to Lyncroft Gardens.

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## "WHEN YE COME TOGETHER"

An Exhortation to Consistency in the Christian profession, based on I Cor. 11, 18.

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The "coming together" for fellowship of the Corinthian Church was the occasion, very frequently, for the most disorderly conduct and unseemly behaviour. But even so, when the worst has been said that can be said, they were perhaps but little worse than many others of the congregations scattered up and down the land. Only, in their case, we are treated to an eye-witness point of view of their sad condition, by one who had their best interests so much at heart. One commentator has called this Corinthian Church "the Church with the lid off", because in Paul's letter to this Church, its congregation stands stripped of all their personal pretensions, only their repulsive realities remain. Sectarian divisions had separated them, each with its own intense preference and hatred; undisguised sin had reared its head—sin such as was not to be found among the heathen at their door — personal disputes, which found their way before the heathen magistrates had arisen in their midst, making the sad scene within the Church a most pitiable one.

Moreover, when the hour of fellowship had come, and the saints in Christ had "come together" to the appointed place, undisciplined individuals, possessing the gift of tongues, would turn the hour appointed for prayer and praise into a babel of confusing sights and sounds; several such being engaged in speech simultaneously, babbling away in unknown tongues, throwing the whole session into hopeless confusion, and laying all the assembly open in the eyes of "the unlearned" and "the believer" to be accounted mad. (I Cor. 14, 23).

Again, in the "Agapee" — the Love-feast with which some of these sessions closed—scenes of sheer gluttony and complete intoxication were sometimes seen; scenes, in which the poor and indigent were often put to shame by brethren who had wealth (I Cor. 11, 22). Altogether these indictments present to our view a most unsatisfactory picture of a Christian Church, and were it not that some true saints were hidden among so much that was corrupt it would be difficult to characterise it as a Church of Christ in any sense.

The Church in Apostolic days has sometimes been styled "the Church of the first Love"—a Church kept pure and unspotted by Apostolic care and oversight. But such a description scarcely tallies with the facts. Censure and reproof is found in every Apostolic writing—not even excepting the letters to

Ephesus and Philippi—a sure token that the human material within each Church was still rough and raw, and still had so much of the way of life brought over from heathen days, or from Jewish insularity incorporated in it. Jewish aloofness and touchiness, Grecian licentiousness and pride, and barbarian brutishness and callousness made a motley mixture of perversity, which, to all human appearance was impossible of amalgamation or unity.

Ostensibly, this patchwork of humanity came together for the purpose of presenting worship to God, and of reminding themselves of what they owed to His Son, who had redeemed them, and for whose return from heaven they had been taught to long and wait. "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven", Paul told the Thessalonians, and what was true of them was also true of their neighbours in the Corinthian metropolis.

To some degree the God of heaven and earth had superseded their former gods of gold or stone, but unfortunately, the old things had been so deeply impressed, that complete change was most difficult. Their worship at the idol shrine had been sensuous and visible—sights and sounds presented to eye and ear that made strong and deep appeal. Worship in an upper room, or in some school (Acts 19, 9) was shorn of all that sensuous appeal which the wild music of the chant, the gorgeous drapery of the priest and the stately pile of masonry could produce in them. Lacking thus the awe-and-passion-provoking influences which these visibly-seen ceremonial things produced, these ill-assorted companies of "called saints" found it difficult to enter into the spirit of worship concerning the "Spiritual" and "Unseen". Inability to visualise the Presence of the Invisible led to unbecoming levity and laxity, and set the atmosphere of the "Gathering" on a purely human plane. Their association was mainly after the flesh—that is, in the common things of this earth-life. Paul spake of it as "carnal"—not of necessity vile, or voluptuous, but of a flesh-life lived on the level of a man; eating, drinking, working, thinking within the mere range of the five senses common to man.

Then, further, though they were professing followers and disciples of Christ, they had seemed to think of Him as a man who once trod this earth, and started this selective organisation into which

they had been invited—this Church fellowship—and had then gone away, but who, at some future time, was expected to return to take it to Himself; but, for the time now present He was away in the far distance of heaven itself, a place far remote from this earth. That He was now possessed of such super-human Personality that, though seated at God's right Hand, He could yet be present in their midst unseen, was a thought they always seemed too earth-bound to grasp. Even those among them possessed of some Spiritual Gift seem to have accounted it to be for phenomenal display, and not as a means to deepen reverence, or intensify adoration for Him they professed to serve. The spirit of true devotion is a state of heart and mind difficult to apprehend at all times—among any people; and we need not wonder that the brethren of Corinth (that most carnal and commercial city of ancient Greece) failed so grievously to attain thereunto.

Even in our own times, among Bible-respecting peoples, and after nineteen centuries of Christian influence (of various sorts) it is a frame of heart and mind most difficult to apprehend. When our little companies "come together" to the appointed place there are very many factors that may block the way of approach to the Holiest things. If a "comer" thereunto has the "artistic gift", heightened at times with a sense of the lofty and sublime, yet finds in his "coming" that he is ushered into a bare room, unadorned, and without softened lights, the chord of true reverence may, for him, be hard to strike. Or if another of cultured refinement himself, hears ill-chosen words spoken in rough husky tones, it may be a thing impossible for him to respond becomingly in reverential praise. Who of us in these Christian lands knows not the power of some stately Church to subdue the soul, or of the throb of some deep-toned harmonies to hush the senses, and make one step more lightly to some quiet seat, and there lay one's inner self prostrate before the Lofty and the Divine?

Church authorities have traded on this fact in human responsiveness, and have built their stately piles accordingly. But in a cold bare room, or in some public hall, devoted, at other times, to so many secularities, it is not an easy thing at any time to respond from the "depths".

Our sense of worship has suffered, perhaps, too often from these things, while our attitude towards such occasions may have become merely casual—just a case of being "there"; just a matter of being one of a company possessing mutual views, and for whom there is some degree of pleasure in hearing or exchanging those views. Or it could be the case that the subject for consideration has become well-trodden ground, and we may feel ourselves so

well-rooted therein, that it fails to arouse enthusiastic gratitude to God, and we would be under no sense of loss had we not been present at the gathering.

It needs here no emphasis to say, both first and last, that our "coming together in the church" should be to worship God. Never should it be to while an hour away, nor yet to be entertained by lofty phrase or cultured utterance. Nor should it be a time exclusively set apart for intensive study, or analytical research. Nor yet should it be an occasion given over to harmonic or melodic song. It is no sin to tell the story of Love Divine in words of rare charm or satisfying beauty, nor yet to find "heart's delight" in the cultured voice as it sets forth the loftier things. Nor is it a crime to analyse the subject with minute care, or make our definitions with exactitude. Indeed, it should be to our mutual pleasure, not less than to our common profit, so to do. The story of Divine Love is worthy, at all times, of our best endeavour. But these things, at their best, are matters of but secondary import—a noble means to a worthier end, and should ever be seen in that secondary light.

An Unseen Presence is in attendance wheresoever His consecrated Saints have "come together in the church". That Unseen Presence alters everything. We do not need to ask how Divinity can project "Itself" into all the assemblies here, there and everywhere. Spiritual sensibility and experience activated by a "living faith" assures us repeatedly that the "Unseen Presence" is *there* "in the midst". To the spiritually sensitive the "Presence" brings and sets the atmosphere for the holy hour. It casts a sense of sacred calm over the "Gathering", and in the quiet hush the keen susceptibility can feel "It" there. To such "It" seems to lift the hanging folds of a veil, beneath which comes, from the other side a sanctifying influence, or else, from another point of view, it thins the curtain which divides this clinging sensuous world from the ever-brightening realities of that beyond. It makes the place of meeting the very vestibule of heaven itself; the ante-room of the very Presence-chamber of God, spite of the bare coldness of the room. To the alert and hungry heart this over-powering sense of the Unseen can mean so much more—so extremely and incomparably much more — than lofty dome or intoned chant, or cultured voice or ornate vestments; it can subdue that heart to rest, and hush it down in reverence more than all other things beside.

And, standing thus invisibly revealed in the midst "It" stands there waiting for the upward reaching of the soul, for the heavenward glancing of the "inner eye"; and then, within the quiet of that hallowed atmosphere, though words be few, or un-

spoken altogether, Communion becomes complete. The yearning spirit, rising from this world of sense, meets and unites with that hallowed Spirit descending from that purer sphere, and in the sanctifying mingling of desire—He with us; we with Him—we feel ourselves encouraged, enriched, and enlarged. We take from Him new strength and satisfaction for our needs; He takes from us our Sacrifice of Praise, and presents it enriched with His own Righteousness to Him who dwells in Light unapproachable.

How grievously we often seem to fall short of this "other-worldly" contact in our seasons of "coming together". How easy it is to fail to sense the Atmosphere which that Presence brings; how lightly we can seem to gravitate to earthly things, and mar the hallowed influence proceeding from the "Sanctifier" Himself. It needs but little more than the thrust and parry of the "keen debate"; the too-keen intensity of question and reply, then as the passions rise, and the "intellect" takes control, a canopy of earth-born things spreads itself above the scene, and (if we take not care) the link between is snapped, and Communion with Him is at an end. Thenceforth the "study" may proceed, but the Worship may be at an end; the discussion may be prolonged, but the "Communion" may have ceased. We may, to our best understanding, have defended our abstract truth, but our very exuberance may have dammed the flow of Living Truth. We may have stood defensively for "IT", but have overlooked our need for "HIM"! We may have called upon our memories in defending or defining long-established doctrine, and have forgotten that our needs can be supplied by Him alone.

In the "study" atmosphere one may, by long experience, become established (and even stuck in the rut); in the atmosphere of "Communion" the memories are of the heart, and may often be quite outside the range of tabulated doctrine in the realm of Providence, that realm of living experience wherein the Great Dispenser makes provision for the daily needs of every moment of the day—of all who live their lives warmly unto Him; and from which, of his own accord, no true child of God can afford to absent himself, when opportunity presents.

Thus we may "come together in one place", but oh! how diverse the results. One may come and find communion with his Lord, another may come and find communion only with his brethren! Experience and observation over many years prove that statement true; broken and ruptured fellowship in many lands is all the evidence we need in support thereof!

What more can one really say? Surely it will be admitted on every hand that every time we "come

together" in the Church it should be an occasion for the most devout worship of our Great God; an occasion when the veil between earth and heaven can become very thin, and the Light from the other side can filter through into our waiting souls! Ought we not be more ready (than we often are) to "come together", if we were more surely blessed with the "eye" that can see and sense the "Blessed Presence" in the midst, and if we had a keener hunger of the soul which none but He can satisfy? Could we ever come to think that we were so well-established in the Truth that we could live without this Spirit-knit Communion with our Father and our Lord, and that our need for the "coming together" was not so great or urgent now? Or, if our eye and heart has learned to see Him ever present, who is invisible, could we ever meet our brethren just to become engaged in the thrust and parry of debate, and then depart thinking we had experienced all there was to have?

If, on the other hand, we have learned the secret of "finding Him" behind and above every gathering, then we shall find that lovely thoughts and well-chosen words will add fragrance to the atmosphere, and bring enchantment to the "inner man" and make the occasion sweet as an oasis on a desert road. Lacking the secret of "finding Him" even beautiful words and lovely thoughts can diffuse only an odour of the flesh—mere intellectuality, or gleanings from philosophy.

Let us illustrate. One day, two brethren met in a city street. The previous night had been "the Meeting Night". One had been present, the other had not. "Well, brother," said the absent one, "how did the Meeting go; did you get any new thought?"

"Indeed, yes", the other replied. "I learned that my Lord was present there with us in that cold, dark hall, and for me, it altered everything. It transformed everything. The hymns we sang were hymns of praise to Him. The prayers we said and sanctioned with our 'Amen' were raised to Him and to our God."

"You learned the Lord was there? Why, of course! that is what the promise says, isn't it? You know—where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst."

"Yes", was the reply, "but those words came alive last night. It is a living text, and a living thought to me now. It was 'new' to have it come alive that way. That thought gripped me all through the night; it is with me all through to-day; I can't forget it now."

Good would it be for everyone if this thought could come alive every time we "come together" in the Church! Every word would be spoken as

under His eye; every word would be heard as though from His Lips, and that would alter everything.

But there is a little more in it than that. This ability to see and sense the Blessed One at all such times is part and parcel of a larger thing. It is only when this sensitivity is part of the whole life that it becomes easy and natural when in the Church. To those who cultivate and practice the Presence of the Lord everywhere, all the time, this is the obvious thing when the hour of fellowship arrives. It is not for them an experience that needs to be conjured up, by effort of the will, but is one that rises spontaneously out of a life of unbroken Companionship, by day and night, with the dearest Object of the desire.

Permit another illustration. Some years ago, after a little group of brethren had been obliged to separate from a former fellowship, one dear Sister made remark, "Well, we came apart from our

brethren to seek something they did not seem to have. But I have not found it yet, that I came out to seek. What more can I do?"

"You have not found 'IT' yet, that you came out to seek?" was the response. "Surely it was not 'IT', but 'HIM' that was the object of your quest. And you must find 'HIM' in your home and in your private life, and then bring your sense of 'HIM' with you as your contribution to our common need." That was enough.

If we seek for "it"—that is, for just a better definition of our creed, we can strive and wrangle our way through life, and still not obtain the best, but if we seek for "Him" behind doctrine, behind experience, behind Providence, behind everything, then we shall find rest to our souls, and salve for every sore. The highest truth is "Him" not merely "IT"—Truth is not an abstract thing—"HE" is "IT". To know this is to know the secret of the Lord in the art and act of fellowship.

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## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

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A contemporary Christian journal, bemoaning the ineffectiveness of so much evangelical effort, asks to what extent it is due to weakness or uncertainty on doctrine. "*An honest onlooker*" says the Editor of the journal concerned, "*would have to say that things are generally in a quite serious, and in some cases, desperate condition among us . . . There is as yet not even the glimmering of a true revival fire, in spite of all the well-meaning efforts that have been made to kindle it.*" He goes on to point out that much modern evangelical literature is of a trivial, shallow character, having nothing in it of solidarity such as that manifested in the solid doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews and he contrasts the basic Christian truths so lucidly expressed in the hymns of, for example, John Wesley, with what he calls the "*light-weight doggerel that still passes for Christian praise and worship in our day, the catchy chorus with the swingy tune.*"

Perhaps, with all his sincerity, that Editor is less than just to the younger generation of our own day. Our world is a different world to that of John Wesley and even to that of Charles Spurgeon. At the same time we in our own fellowship must admit, if we are honest with ourselves, to much the same problem. Our witness, too, is ineffective, and that certainly not for any lack of sincerity and desire on our part. Neither is that failure confined to one generation amongst us; the younger ones, despite differing outlook and methods, have to

make the same confession. The world listens for a moment, mildly interested if at all, and passes on. An order of society which is fast bleeding to death, and in its saner moments knows that it is bleeding to death, looks apathetically at the physician who claims to have the infallible remedy, and turns away in indifference.

How much has uncertainty in doctrine, in the individual case, and confusion of belief in the community, to do with this? Our fellowship, much more so than most Christian groups, has in the past laid much stress upon the importance of "sound doctrine" and reaped a harvest of doctrinal dissension and disagreement which, among other evils it has wrought, has made it impossible for us to present a coherent statement of faith to the enquirer.

There are, of course, those amongst us, increasingly becoming lone voices in the wilderness, who call for our return to the ancient ways, and declare that uncompromising adherence to the definitions of faith and belief laid down sixty years ago is the only course pleasing to God. Unfortunately that call usually takes no account of the changing world, neither does it take cognisance of the fact that if the man who formulated those definitions several generations ago had been influenced by the same argument he would have stayed in the Second Advent Church, and the fellowship he founded and led for forty years would never have been started. Conviction in doctrine and unanimity in doctrine is not the same thing as being static or standstill in

doctrine. And yet, if complete anarchy in doctrinal thought within the group—and that is a deliberately chosen word — is to be preferred as a lesser evil than compulsory uniformity of doctrine, must we not accept the consequences? At least one section of our fellowship seems to have faced up squarely to the problem and chosen the alternative of uniformity on the basis of the accepted faith of forty years ago, and in the sincerity of that conviction gone forward with a programme of witness which does at least speak out in various parts of the world with a united and consistent voice. In any aspect of human relations it is a fact that the group putting forth a consistent and positive thesis with an air of confidence will attract a wider audience and command more attention than the group which is not even agreed within itself on the things it is trying to say.

Perhaps then it would be a good thing if, instead of bemoaning the ineffectiveness of our collective witness, or dopping ourselves with the comfortable but soul destroying conclusion that the real reason is the imminent end of the Church's career on earth and that God is suspending the business of further conversions until the next Age, we had a look at

those beliefs which are basic to the existence of our fellowship as a separate group and which in fact constitute the only reason for our existence as a separate group and see if we cannot at least show a united front to the world on those matters. We lay a great deal of stress upon the virtue of constantly studying the Scriptures with open minds to receive new truth; men to whom we preach are at least entitled to ask a simple and direct statement of the message we derive from our study without having their perception confused by immediate denials from others claiming to represent the same message. There was once a cartoon circulating amongst us depicting an individual representing "the world" being assailed on all sides by an army of enthusiasts labelled with the names of all the denominations of Christendom, each trying to press the claims of his own faith as the only true one; the poor fellow had his hands to his head in desperation. We are getting perilously near that position ourselves. Is it too late to do anything about it?

*Readers' comments will be welcomed by the Editor.*

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## MANCHESTER NEW YEAR CONVENTION

Part II (Concluded from last issue)

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The second day of the Convention opened with Bro. F. Musk (*Bury*) as first speaker. He showed how Moses, in Deut. 4, 1-24 reminded the children of Israel that though God spoke to them in the Mount, yet they saw no similitude lest they should make an image. We also are warned to keep ourselves from idols, for all these happenings in Israel were ensamples for us.

Canaan was promised to Israel but the Church have been translated from fallen humanity to heavenly places (Eph. 1, 19-20).

All through the book of Hebrews this contrast is shown. In the first chapter we are told that God spoke through the prophets but now by the Son. In the second chapter the contrast continues showing that if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and the transgressor received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which was first spoken by the Lord. In the third chapter we have the contrast between the house of servants and the house of sons. Later the Priesthood under Aaron is contrasted with the priesthood of Christ. In Hebrews 9, the holy place made with

hands is contrasted with heaven itself. The consummation of our hopes is centred in Christ Who is coming again. In 2 Pet. 1, 19 we have the prophetic word confirmed. "Take heed lest that day comes upon you unawares." Be not overcome in your hearts with the cares of this world, (Luke 21, 34-36).

After lunch on Sunday, Bro. Roberts (*Stockport*) took the chair for the Prayer, Praise and Testimony Meeting. There was a good attendance and many brethren testified to God's dealings with them and the individual blessings received. Again, as last year, the time could well have been extended. It was very uplifting to hear and see the readiness of the brethren to testify.

The names of several brethren who were ill or in hospital were given to the chairman and by a unanimous vote the scripture Rom. 8, 35-39 was sent to all.

After the Prayer, Praise and Testimony meeting, Bro. Quennell (*Warrington*) spoke on "*Implications of present day events in Israel.*" He said we had all had a great surprise—we none of us even thought that Israel would attack Egypt — he likened it to

the mouse attacking the cat.

The days in which we are living were comparable to the days of Noah. Only Noah's family was saved. Similarly the only people who matter to-day are God's people. — God shut the door of the Ark and their preservation was sealed, also the world's doom was sealed. In Rev. 3, 12 we are told that the overcomers would go out no more, but would be pillars in the Temple of God.

He showed how the prophecies of the past had had physical fulfilment — "Behold a virgin shall conceive" — "He shall open the blind eyes, the deaf ears, make the lame to walk" etc. All these events and many others had been fulfilled physically at the first advent.

Then speaking of the Jews, he showed how Jerusalem (the Jews) had been trodden down till the Times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. In 1948 the sovereign State of Israel was established—this could never have happened only by the working of God.

He then turned to Rev. 16, showing from verse 15 that this seemed to be the time of the coming of the Lord as a thief. He pointed out that it was a time of destiny and the Lord's people would be the main target of Satan's activity.

"The bride hath made herself ready." To be ready was more important than the method of our going.

After tea on Sunday, Bro. Lodge (*Central London*) took the platform. He spoke on the text from Luke 21, 28 'Look up'. He showed how many parts of this great prophecy up to verse 25 had already had a fulfilment, e.g. verse 6 was fulfilled in A.D. 70, but from verse 25 onwards this portion seems to point to our times.

Quoting John 2, 2 he pointed out how Christ was the propitiation, not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world—thus there were two classes.

He went on to show the one-ness of the Body of Christ, how each member was so important to complete the Body — so necessary, even if only to be compared with the little finger.

Returning to Luke 21, he touched upon the signs of the Second Advent, then, pointing out the parable of the fig tree, he showed how the buds indicated the approach of summer, and in the same way the signs pointed to the time of the Second Advent. Here he emphasised the thought that knowing now the nearness of this event through the signs, we should keep our minds on the spiritual things (Col. 3, 1-3) "If ye be risen with Christ

*seek those things which are above . . . . set your affections on things above*". If we have the mind of Christ we shall think as He thinks; if we have not the mind of Christ, we are none of His. Our desire is to be there, but not as escapist.

This does not apply to all the human family but to a "little flock" — "Strait is the gate and few there be that find it" — perfect in heart towards God. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also".

In his closing remarks the chairman thanked one and all — our Heavenly Father, the speakers, the brethren for their spirit of love and happiness, which was manifest throughout the Convention, and last but not least the "backroom boys" who had served us so well and so punctually at all the meals. Brethren from distant classes were asked to take the love and good wishes of the Convention to those not able to have been present, and the text Rom. 8, 35-39. A closing prayer and "*God be with you*" ended the Convention. Expressions of joy and happiness were heard on all sides proclaiming the blessings received. It was indeed a happy and joyful time of spiritual refreshment.

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Here is an extract from the speech of David Ben-Gurion, Premier of Israel, to the 24th Congress of the World Zionist Federation.

*"If I am asked what will secure the survival of Jewry in the Diaspora (Dispersion) I shall say, 'Two things — Hebrew education and a personal attachment to the hope of the Messianic vision. Hebrew education means not only learning the Hebrew language but the study, in the original, of the Book of books, which is the certificate of the identity, the honour, and the genius of the Jewish people.'"*

This, of course, is still a long way from the whole-hearted acceptance of Divine leadership which is to characterise the policies of Israel a little later on — in those coming days when "*the governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be our strength in the Lord of Hosts their God*", and these same governors shall be "*like a hearth of fire in a wood and a torch of fire in a sheaf and shall burn up the nations round about*", but it is at any rate a tremendous advance on the policies of the other nations of to-day, not one of whom will so much as admit the power of the Word of God into their councils. In fact one wonders if some of the statesmen of to-day even know of its existence.

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## STORIES OF SALVATION

### 1. The Good Shepherd

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"Never man spake like this man" was the verdict of the Temple guard upon Jesus of Nazareth, when they returned to the Jewish authorities without having arrested Him. (John 7, 46). The same testimony is given by Luke and is recorded of those who heard the Lord preach in the synagogue at Nazareth, "All bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." (Luk: 4, 22). When we read over again the lovely illustrations which he used for His preaching we too are thrilled by the simple stories which so powerfully convey deep truths. They must have contrasted strongly against the current trend of First Century teaching by the Jewish leaders. Their chief concern was for superficial religion and interpretations of Mosaic Law which the ordinary folk could not understand. Their sermons were directed toward those who had already made some confession of religious faith and who were outwardly righteous. Jesus had a message of hope and comfort for the outcasts and social misfits, spoken in language which all could understand and apply to their own lives. Such was the parable of the "Lost Sheep". A mixed audience heard him convey a lesson of salvation in a setting which was familiar to them all.

The shepherd has been out all day leading his flock and now returns to the fold for the night. As the sheep file past, the shepherd counts them one by one, noting perhaps their condition and needs. At last they have all slipped beneath his searching gaze but one is discovered to be missing. Normally, his day's work would be almost complete and he, along with his flock, could settle down for rest and repose. But within the shepherd's breast there surges a compassion for the poor, lonely sheep, which has been left out on the cold, cheerless hillside. Without thought of his own comfort or safety, the master of the flock quickly turns towards the path along which he has so recently come. His thoughts are centred on that bleating sheep, away from the protection and shelter of its home. It would be an easy prey for wild beasts and readily succumb to inclement weather.

The account in Luke 15, 4-7 includes these words "until he find it". This is not the whim of an hireling or the curiosity of a stranger, but the love of a tender heart which spares no effort to reclaim that which has been lost. No obstacle or personal injury was to be allowed to thwart the

shepherd's effort. It might mean a long walk or a difficult climb, perhaps beset by hindrances and frustration, but these would only serve to spur the shepherd on "until he find it."

When at last the wayward sheep is found the shepherd places it on his shoulders for the triumphant return homeward. There is an absence of scolding or grumbling in this shepherd's voice, only pleasure and rejoicing. With the strength of a father and the tenderness of a mother the precious burden is borne towards the security and provision of the fold. Then the shepherd calls together his friends and neighbours that they may join with him in his happiness.

Jesus had drawn a picture of himself. Before coming to earth, He had enjoyed ceaseless fellowship in heaven with His Father. He had executed His Father's purpose in the creation of the Universe. His life before coming to earth had been one of unparalleled bliss, untouched by sin and its consequent misery. He willingly forsook it all that He might recover that which had been lost in men's rebellion against God. He saw not only the broken law against God's inflexible justice but the tragedy of man's condition. He saw that little children were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, with no hope of rescue from their plight. He saw too that the best intentioned leaders among men, however high their moral standards, and however brilliant their intellects, found it impossible to save the human race from its plight. Men were like the helpless little sheep out on the mountainside. Leaving the splendour and peace of his heavenly abode, the be'oved Son of God came to make His home on earth. He grew up among sinful men and women, and lived in most difficult circumstances in order that he might fully understand the creation which he came to restore to harmony and peace with God. He became in the fullest sense of the word, the Good Shepherd.

Reiterated in every Gospel story is the great compassionate love which inspired his preaching and work among men. Unlike any other "saviour of the world", Jesus' sole purpose was to restore that which had been lost. There was no self gratification nor desire for the esteem of men. Because of this he was able to speak freely to all types of people irrespective of their social background. Differences of education and nationality are human barriers which could not hinder his message. His

penetrating sermons contained food for thought valuable to professor and peasant alike. His life was devoted to the work of delivering men from their sins and showing them the way back to God. His days were spent in labouring among and preaching to ordinary folk of city and village. His nights were spent alone on the mountain top with his Father, receiving strength and guidance for his ministry of reconciliation. Besides all this, he spared time to instruct his little band of followers in His work, so that when he departed from their sight he could still reach men through them.

How different was his manner from any other leader among men. The religious leaders were too proud to hold out the hand of friendship to any except their own self-righteous set. The people of Israel were accustomed rather to the rough handling of Roman soldiers and to the unjust behaviour of the wealthy classes. As for the misfits in society such as the common thief or national traitor like the tax-collector, there was no one to give them a helping hand out of their unhappy condition. Yet Jesus came looking for people like that and was prepared to give his life in order to restore them to an upright and happy life. As we watch him at work through the eyes of the evangelists, we see a man toiling to recover broken bodies and labouring to heal broken hearts. He was repeatedly touched by the pathetic sights of suffering and frustration which he saw. On one occasion Matthew tells us "he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matthew 9, 36). His words of tenderness and peace echo down the centuries to all humanity, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (Matt. 11, 28, 29).

What lesson has this parable for us apart from its message of salvation? Perhaps the Good Shepherd sought us out and brought us to his fold many years ago, and today we have no need of being found again. We have rejoiced in the reality of the "Shepherd Psalm" and have experienced the wonderful care of our Saviour in supplying our every need. When we are wayward he restores our soul, and when we pass through trials and suffering he "anoints our heads with oil". Since He found us we have learned to love the shepherd very much. We know the touch of his gentle hand and recognise the tone in his sympathetic voice. But are we to enjoy this protection and provision without it stirring our souls and inspiring us to follow the Shepherd's noble example?

The work which Jesus commenced by the shores of Galilee and in the thoroughfares

of Jerusalem did not end when the Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep. He has imparted His resurrection power to His Church whereby they have continued in His purpose to reconcile all men unto God. Immediately following the baptism of the spirit at Pentecost the apostles began to obey the Master's command "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16, 15). Peter, who led the Early Church in the first flush of obedience and power, wrote in later years, "for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps . . . for ye were as sheep going astray but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Peter 2, 21-25).

If in fact we are following in His steps we shall be doing the same work which He did while on earth. He is still the good shepherd and He operates today through those of His followers who have been in close fellowship with Him. We who fully surrender our lives to Jesus become His instruments of blessing others by reaching out to those who are lost. Twentieth century life with all its inventions and refinements has not changed human nature. Adoration at the shrine of Science and Progress has not uprooted sin from the hearts of men. Only Jesus can do that, and He does do it through us, just so far as we yield our hands and our feet, our lips and our pens to His command.

Each day we rub shoulders with some who so far have not responded to the call of the Good Shepherd. Do they hear the voice of the Saviour as we speak to them? Does our behaviour towards our colleagues or neighbours denote the gentleness and care of a tender shepherd? Or does our biting tongue and rough handling towards other folk indicate that we are no more than an hireling? Sheep are timid creatures and are easily repulsed, yet when in need and danger they are readily assured by the skill of the shepherd. We have in the Word of God that food and drink, and that comfort and balm, which the world needs today. It is our privilege and our duty to see that we are not selfish with God's gifts but distribute them gladly according to His Word. If we fail to do so, we shall not be gaining the experience required by those who will be associated in the work of reconciling all men to God in the age to come.

The life of the Good Shepherd was not given in vain. Jesus died in order that the lost everywhere, including those in their graves, might hear his voice and be brought home to the fold. It is the privilege of those who give themselves in complete self-surrender to Christ now, to be fitted for the work of reconciling and rehabilitating all men to

the finished creation as God intended this earth to be. But association with Jesus in that work can only become a reality if our very natures are transformed by the renewing of our mind into the likeness of our Saviour. We must have His compassion and patience; our hands and voice must become gentle like His, in order that even the most wayward sheep shall have fullest opportunity to be brought back into harmony with the Creator and His creation.

The work of that time when the violent shall no more prosper and all shall learn the way of

peace, is described most beautifully by Isaiah in chapter 40, vv. 10, 11. The feeding of the flock, the gathering of the lambs, and the leading of those with young, is the work of shepherds who by reason of their uprightness and sweetness of character have gained the confidence of the sheep who depend upon them. They are principles by which the Kingdom of God upon earth is to be established and they are the qualities to be found in all who will have the oversight of that Kingdom. May those same principles dominate our lives now, so shaping our characters for God's service in this world and the world that is to come.

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## DANIEL IN BABYLON

*The story of a great man's faith*

### 10. The Beginning of the End

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It was two years after Daniel's dream of the four world-empires, in the guise of four ravenous wild beasts, that the aged prophet's eyes were opened again. Perhaps it was the quickening tempo of political events around him that sharpened the old man's faculties and enabled him to apply himself more devotedly to the leading of the Spirit. For more than ten years past the name of a military leader, Cyrus of Anshan, descendant of the kings of Elam, had been familiar to him as it was to all dwellers in Babylon. Cyrus with his armies was rapidly bringing all the lands of the Middle East into subjection to the rising power of the Medes, who with the Babylonians had destroyed Assyria some hundred years previously and in the days of Nebuchadnezzar had ranked as a friendly power to Babylon. Queen Amytis, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, was herself a princess of Media. But Nebuchadnezzar had been dead now for thirteen years and Queen Amytis was destined to follow him only a year after this particular vision of Daniel, and Cyrus had ambitious designs on Babylon. His army was engaged in the siege of Sardis, capital of Lydia, the only power beside Babylon which remained unsubdued, and Daniel, astute politician that he was, must have known that Babylon's turn could not be much longer delayed.

So it is not surprising that in the eighth chapter of Daniel we are taken right into the centre of the happenings which were to transfer the sovereignty of the world first from Babylon to Medo-Persia, and then from Medo-Persia to Greece. This vision and this prophecy is one of the easiest in the whole of the Bible to interpret for the reason that its application is given by the revealing angel in terms of the plain names of the countries concerned. The

correspondence with history is so marked that there can be no doubt about the matter. The factor that requires a little more thought, and yet is of greater importance than the interpretation, is the question: of what value is this strictly "history-book" prophecy to us? But that question can be looked at after we have considered the vision itself.

According to chap. 8, verse 2, Daniel was "at Shushan the palace in the province of Elam". It is fairly obvious from the text that he was there only "in the spirit," not literally. Elam and Babylon were virtually in a state of war at this time and Daniel could hardly have been in the capital city of the enemy. He might very well have been a visitor in his earlier years when the two countries were on friendly terms; official business might well have taken him thither, so that it may not be at all strange to think of him seeing, in his dream, surroundings which were already familiar, and realising, perhaps for the first time, that here was a future stage for later acts of the Divine Plan when Babylon had ceased to be a power in the hands of God. Shushan eventually became the capital city of Persia, and was the home of Queen Esther and the scene of the events narrated in the Book of Esther, some seventy years later on.

The vision itself was a vivid and clear-cut one, easily remembered because of its simplicity and restrained symbolism. A ram, having horns of unequal length, the higher coming up last, was butting its way irresistibly west, north and south—obviously therefore coming from the east—until it stood supreme and none challenged its authority. For a moment Daniel saw it thus, and then beheld a furious he-goat bearing one great horn advancing from the west, charging the ram, casting it to the

ground, and stamping upon it. So the he-goat in its turn stood supreme.

Now the great horn was broken and in its place there grew up four smaller horns; but the force and power of the goat was not the same; it was spent. *Then there appeared, budding out from one of those horns, a little horn, a little horn which began to wax greater and greater, turning itself toward the east and the south, and towards the land which was always in Daniel's heart, the land of Israel.* With that thought the background of the vision changed, and Daniel realised that the horn was some strong power that would arise; he saw that power reaching up to heaven as though to challenge God in His own domain, and tearing down some of the stars from heaven, and stamping upon them.

Now Daniel was in the land of his desires, standing in the holy city Jerusalem, and beheld the Temple of his longings, rebuilt and purified, the morning and evening sacrifices offered in their due order by the appointed priests according to the law of Moses, the fulfilment of all that he had waited and sought through so many long years. Here, at last, was the answer to his prayers. And he watched until that godless power revealed itself a ruthless despot which led its followers to bring to an end those morning and evening sacrifices, to profane and defile the holy Temple, to destroy and cast down all that was sacred to the One God, and persecute and slay those who maintained their loyalty and their faith.

So the prophet's hopes and short-lived joys were dashed as he saw the fair vision of Zion's glory crumble again into the dust and ashes of a ruined Temple and scattered people, as his fellows in Judea had seen it happen in reality forty years before. But that was all in the past, and God had promised that He would restore Israel and dwell again with them in the Holy place; this vision spoke of the future, and declared the heart-breaking truth that after that restoration had become an accomplished fact and Israel has been delivered from captivity, the forces of evil would again prevail. With what painful intensity must Daniel have listened for the answer to the angel's question (vs. 13), "*For how long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?*" For what further long period of time must the desolation of the sanctuary and the oppression of God's people persist, before the final consummation of eternal glory for Israel? It was a gleam of hope; the desolation was not to be for ever; and Daniel listened anxiously for the answer.

"*Unto two thousand and three hundred evening-mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.*"

Two thousand three hundred omissions of the daily morning and evening offerings of the sacrificial lamb. After that the oppressor's hand would be lifted, the profaned and defiled Temple be ceremonially purified and re-dedicated and then the worship of God be resumed without let or hindrance. That was the message to Daniel and that the end of the vision proper. At that point the revealing angel came forward to explain to Daniel what it was all about.

"*The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.*" That is a plain, categorical statement admitting of no argument. The higher horn, which came up last, is plainly Persia. Media as an empire came into existence at the death of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in 711 B.C., when the Medes revolted from Assyrian domination and established themselves as an independent kingdom under Deioces. Persia owed its rise largely to Cyrus more than a hundred and fifty years later, but in fact Persia did not become the acknowledged dominant factor in the Medo-Persian partnership until the time of Darius Hystaspes, the third king after Cyrus. Hence "the higher came up last." Daniel was perfectly familiar with the political set up of the nations in his own day and he would readily grasp the significance of this part of the vision. Next he was brought face to face with something that was still two centuries future, the overthrow of the Persian empire by Greece. "*The rough goat is the king of Grecia; and the great horn that is between the eyes is the first king.*" That king is known in history; he was Alexander the Great, who led the Greeks into Asia round about the year 330 B.C. and subdued every nation in his path to the frontiers of India — and died at Babylon on his return journey a few years later. Thus was the great horn broken, even as the prophecy foretold, and the empire built up by Alexander in those few years was divided between four of his leading generals. "*Now that being broken, whereas four (horns) stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.*" Continued strife between contending leaders, ambitious for power, was resolved at last in the formation of four separate kingdoms something like twenty-two years after Alexander's death. Macedonia passed into the control of Cassander; Thrace, to Lysimachus; Syria, Judah, Babylon and Persia, to Seleucus, and Egypt to Ptolemy. Israel was sandwiched between Syria in the north and Egypt in the south and her fortunes were heretofore bound up with these two contending powers. On this basis is built the further prophecies in Daniel picturing warfare between the "king of the north" and the "king of the south."

Up to this point this vision follows and amplifies

both Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image and Daniel's dream of the four wild beasts, but whereas those dreams only showed the succession of four empires, gold, silver, copper, iron; and lion, bear, leopard, and strange beast, this vision gives certain distinctive details of the second and third empires and distinguishes them by name. In verse 22 of chap. 8 therefore we are brought in history to about the year 300 B.C. by which time the contending factions in the break-up of Alexander's empire had settled their differences and the four kingdoms were more or less firmly established.

Now the revealing angel ceases to use definite names. The "little horn" which came out of one of the four horns is defined as a fierce king who will arise "in the latter time" of these four kingdoms and will be manifested as an enemy of God and a defiler of the sanctuary, but at the end he "shall be broken without hand," and it is here that possible interpretations vary. The most natural understanding of the expression "*in the latter time of their kingdom*" would appear to be the virtual ending of this four-kingdom set-up and its replacement by the fourth empire of prophecy, Rome, the iron of the image and the strange beast in Daniel's dream. In point of fact three of the kingdoms—Macedonia, Thrace and Egypt—were all absorbed by Rome during the century before the birth of Christ. Of the fourth, Syria and the terrain west of the Euphrates were added to the Roman Empire at the same time but the eastern provinces of the "king of the north"—Assyria, Babylon, Persia,—never did become part of Rome, but merged instead into the not inconsiderable empire of Parthia, the one great power Rome never did subdue. Parthia in turn disappeared before the Saracen armies early in the Christian era. It would seem therefore that the "little horn" in the "latter time of their kingdom" (the four-kingdom quartette), must have arisen during that century or so during which Rome was pressing inexorably upon them.

If this be conceded, there is not much doubt that Antiochus Epiphanes, the greatest oppressor of the Jews ever known, who ruled Syria and Judah round about the year 170 B.C., is the "fierce king" to whom the angel referred. Prophetic writers have described his conduct in such detail that there is no need to repeat it here; the Jews themselves have never been in any doubt as to his place in this prophecy. Antiochus launched a furious persecution against Jewish worship; he plundered the Temple and desecrated it by offering a sow upon the Brazen Altar; this was the defilement from which the sanctuary was later to be cleansed. Plenty of calculations exist interpreting the two thousand three hundred days as the literal number of days—

about three and a half years—during which the Temple was to lie defiled. It is a fact that the cleansing and re-dedication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus in 165 B.C. was approximately three and a half years after its defilement in 168 B.C. The two thousand three hundred "evening-mornings"—repetitions of the evening and morning sacrifice—is equal to eleven hundred and fifty literal days, and this was approximately, but only approximately, the interval between defilement and cleansing. So far as can be discovered from the histories of the period, the actual time was about eleven hundred and ninety-two days.

That is the natural and most obvious interpretation, carrying the prophetic thread to within two centuries of the First Advent, and no farther. Other systems of interpretation identify the "little horn" with Rome, with the irruption of the Turkish power from Central Asia, with Mahomet and the Moslem religion, with the Papacy, and so on. These presentations will not be examined here. Suffice it that Daniel perceived from this vision the probably very unwelcome truth that even though Israel be delivered from the power of Babylon and Jerusalem be restored, the days of Israel's darkness were not ended; trouble and distress were yet to be their lot because of renewed unfaithfulness and apostasy. The end of all evil and the time of the kingdom were still a long way off.

The realisation came slowly. Even yet Daniel was not permitted to perceive the detail of wars and rumours of wars which were to fill the long Gospel Age and terminate in a time of trouble which had not been since there was a nation. That was reserved for his final vision, the one that is recorded in his tenth to twelfth chapters, and that vision was vouchsafed him something like fifteen years after the one we are now considering. Slowly, throughout the whole of his long life, Daniel was brought to realise that the ways of God, sure and unchangeable though they be, require for their accomplishment what seems, to the mind of man, long and sometimes weary terms of years. One little human life is a very short span in the vast time-scale of the Creator's outworking purpose.

Perhaps that is the real lesson for us in Daniel chapter 8. Whether the little horn is descriptive of Antiochus or Mahomet, or of both; whether the mystic 2300 represents literal days or symbolic years, or only evenings and mornings, half-days, is all of very little consequence compared with the great central truth embedded in this chapter. The downfall of the Gentile powers which oppressed Old Testament Israel, the return of the captives to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of their Temple and their city, would not of itself abolish evil and bring in

everlasting righteousness. Righteous zeal and true worship would flourish again, but it would flag and fade. Apostasy and iniquity would certainly return, and with it the distress and oppression which under Israel's covenant was the logical and inevitable consequence. Again must the rod of the Lord be wielded, and whether that rod be Antiochus the scourge of Israel or Mahomet the scourge of Christendom matters little, for the principle is the same. Both Daniel's people and all the world must needs wait for two great things, both of which are necessary to bring in the golden age for which Daniel longed. One is the First Advent and the other the Second Advent. In visions yet to come Daniel was destined to see each of those great events pictured, and only with both of them accomplished facts did he at last see the glad vision of resurrection.

So it must be with us. We have been privileged, as Daniel was never privileged, to realise the work of the First Advent in the past and completed. We are privileged to know that we live in the days of the Second Advent but we do not see the work of that Advent completed — in fact it is scarcely begun. Like Daniel, we still do not know "how long." Blessed are we if, again like Daniel, we rest firm in our conviction that, though it tarry, "it will surely come, it will not tarry." Even though, still like Daniel, we are destined first to "rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Daniel died in Babylon without ever seeing that for which his heart had waited his whole life long; we, like so many of our forebears in the past, may have to do the same. Happy we if, notwithstanding that, we are found steadfast in faith until the end.

*To be continued*

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## A NOTE ON THE LOGOS

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Several readers responded to the request in a recent issue for information upon a claimed Eastern custom which has been said to illustrate the term "Logos" (Word) as applied to the Son, proceeding from God and made flesh in the days of His earthly life. A combination of these letters refers first to a footnote in the "*Emphatic Diaglott*", which has been familiar to most of us for many years, and supplements this with information which the "*Diaglott*" does not give.

The "*Diaglott*" note reads:

*"The following singular Eastern custom may perhaps illustrate the phraseology of the first part of this chapter (John 1, 1). In Abyssinia, there is an officer named Kal Hatze; the word or voice of the king, who stands always upon the steps of the throne, at the side of a lattice window, where there is a hole, covered in the inside with a curtain of green taffeta. Behind this curtain the king sits, and speaks through the aperture to the Kal Hatze, who communicates his commands to the officers, judges, and attendants. (Bruce's Travels)".*

Now it seems that the Bruce thus referred to in "*Diaglott*" was one James Bruce, an African explorer born in Stirlingshire, Scotland, in 1730. As a young man he engaged in business in London and in 1762 became British Consul-General in Algiers. Six years later he set out on his travels, first studying Roman ruins in North Africa, then sailing up the Nile to Syene and eventually pene-

trating to Gondar, the then capital of Abyssinia. During his stay in that district he discovered the source of the Blue Nile and traced its course to the White Nile, so adding much to European knowledge of that hitherto little known part of the African continent. Returning in 1770 to Egypt, he ultimately settled again in Scotland where in 1790 he published his "*Travels to discover the source of the Nile*" in five large volumes. This work is evidently the one referred to in the "*Diaglott*". He died in 1794.

Later travellers have confirmed the general accuracy of Bruce's work, and on that basis it may be well accepted that the custom which has been associated with the word "Logos" was actually in vogue at the time of Bruce's sojourn in Abyssinia. Be it noted, though, that this was only adduced as an illustration of the word "Logos". The Abyssinian official mentioned was not himself called the "King's Logos", and in fact the word itself has a much older derivation. It was in general use in Israel in Old Testament times to indicate the Word of God which was the vehicle of His creative and administrative power, and was identified in the Jewish mind with the "Wisdom" of God, which was likewise endowed with the thought of personality. Thus we have the famous "Wisdom" chapters in the Book of Proverbs, in which Wisdom is personified and claims to be the medium of Divine instruction to man and to have been with God at the dawn of creation; "*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before his works of old.*"

In like manner the Book of Wisdom in the Apocrypha likewise presents the same personified view of Divine Wisdom. When John says therefore that the Logos was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, he was really telling his readers that the Logos of God in which they had always been taught

to believe, had at last and in reality appeared amongst men in a body of flesh. And that, says John, is the only means, and *the* means, by which God the Father can reveal himself to men. "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son . . . . . he hath declared (revealed) him*".

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## THE SERVANT OF THE PRIEST

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*"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus"* (John 17, 10).

The occurrence is recorded in detail by all four of the Evangelists; they appear to have invested it with some degree of importance. John even takes care to preserve the servant's name. It seems so irrelevant an addition to the story that one wonders if there is more hidden beneath the surface than appears at first sight. It was in all probability the Temple guard, under the control of the High Priests, together with a party of Roman soldiers under their own centurion, which set out to arrest Jesus, and without doubt the High Priest's personal representative would accompany them to ensure that all went according to plan. Peter the impulsive would quite naturally pick on this official as the first object of attack in his unavailing defence of his Master. The subsequent action of Jesus is the last of His miracles, of which we have any record, before His death. Malchus was probably the last human being to feel the kindly touch of those life-giving hands and to experience the thrill of creative vitality run through his body as the healing power flowed into him and made him whole. But would this be the only reason for the prominence given to this apparently quite trivial happening?

Did Malchus become a believer as the result of his experience? Was his name preserved by John because in later years the Christian assemblies had been familiar with the presence of a man who had once gone out to assist at the arrest of Jesus of Nazareth and had ended, like Saul of Tarsus, by becoming a devoted follower? Did the servant of the High Priest transfer his allegiance and become instead a bond-slave of Jesus Christ?

There is a hint in one of the early Christian writings which seems to indicate that the Christians of the first century knew more about this matter than we do to-day. Paul tells us, quietly, in 1 Cor. 15, 7 that our Lord after His resurrection "appeared unto James", His own natural half-brother, the one

who became the head of the infant Church at Jerusalem, presided over the historic conference recorded in Acts 15, and wrote the Epistle bearing his name. Paul adds no details of that appearance; he speaks as though it was a story already well known to his readers, as doubtless it was. But in the document known as the Gospel to the Hebrews, which is thought to have been written about seventy years after the Crucifixion and therefore about forty years after Paul's death, the story then current among the Christians as to Jesus' appearance to James is given in greater detail, and with it a casual allusion which may constitute a link with the story of Malchus.

*"Now the Lord, when He had given the linen cloth unto the servant of the priest, went unto James and appeared to him, for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour when he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen again from among them that sleep . . ."*

Who was this "servant of the priest" who, according to Christian tradition was present at the tomb when the resurrection took place? It is recalled that the first witnesses of the resurrection were the members of the guard, who actually beheld the rolling away of the stone, a feat which was already completed when the women arrived on the scene. (Mark 16, 4). These keepers were not Pilate's soldiers, but were drawn from the Temple guard, as is evident by a comparison of Pilate's reply "*Ye have a watch—make it as sure as ye can*" (Matt. 27, 65) with the action of the keepers in reporting the sequel to the priests and not to Pilate (Matt. 28, 11). What more likely then that Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, present at the arrest in Gethsemane, should also be present with—perhaps in charge of—the guard at the tomb? And if this is so, what must have been his feelings, when, in the very early hours of that morning, the ground heaved and the rocks shook, the great stone closing the tomb rolled back, and Malchus and his men, confronted with an altogether unexpected and awe-inspiring sight "did shake and become as dead men"? (Matt. 28, 4).

Whether Jesus Himself appeared to the keepers before their precipitate flight and before the women arrived at the tomb the Gospels do not say; but the incident related in the "Gospel to the Hebrews" may well enshrine a verbal testimony which has not been incorporated in the canonical books. If in fact the "servant of the priest" who suffered at Peter's hands and was miraculously healed by Jesus was also a witness of the resurrection at the moment it occurred, there is a new light thrown on that mysterious "young man in a long white garment" who, according to Mark's account (Mark 16, 2-7) was found by the women very soon afterwards sitting inside the tomb. "He is not here" said that young man to them, "He is risen." That he was not one of the disciples is evident from his words "Go ye, and tell his disciples." It has been conjectured that he was John Mark, the lad who was so close an attendant upon all that Jesus did; it might be, however, that Malchus, present at the tomb, seeing

before him the One who had touched him so tenderly a few days before, knowing Him to have died upon the Cross, knew in a flash that He had indeed triumphed over death, and in the wonder of that meeting remained behind to be discovered by the women when the guards had fled.

Who was it that saw the mighty angel, glorious in appearance, roll back the stone? (Matt. 28, 2). Not the women—the stone was already rolled back when they arrived. This particular piece of testimony must have come from one of the guards or from one who was present with them, and whose testimony was afterwards accepted by the infant Church and incorporated into Matthew's Gospel.

Is it the truth of the matter then, that Malchus became a Christian and, although his testimony to the Resurrection is not preserved in the Gospels, something of the wonderful thing that happened to him on that wonderful morning has been preserved in the traditions of the early Church?

### *Statement of Accounts*

<i>Receipts</i>				<i>Payments</i>								
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.					
BALANCE IN HAND, 1 Jan. 1956	...	413	3	6	BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY:							
CONTRIBUTIONS:					Printing	279	9	11				
Bible Study Monthly	327	14	11		Postage	42	9	4				
Tract Fund	...	26	4	3	Stationery & Sundries	14	16	11				
Meetings	...	12	6	0	-----			336	16	2		
		-----	366	5	2	TRACTS:						
					Printing	31	2	2				
					Postage	3	11	0	-----	34	13	2
					MEETINGS:							
					Hire of Hall	12	10	0				
					Advertising	6	2	6				
					Printing	2	19	1				
					Miscellaneous	15	0	0				
					-----				22	6	7	
					BALANCE IN HAND, 31 Dec. 1956	...	385	12	9			
					-----				-----	779	8	8
					£779	8	8			£779	8	8

B. G. DUMONT,  
*Treasurer.*

I have examined the above account with the vouchers submitted to me, and certify that it is in accordance therewith.

February 18th, 1957.

K. L. GUARD,  
*Certified Accountant.*



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

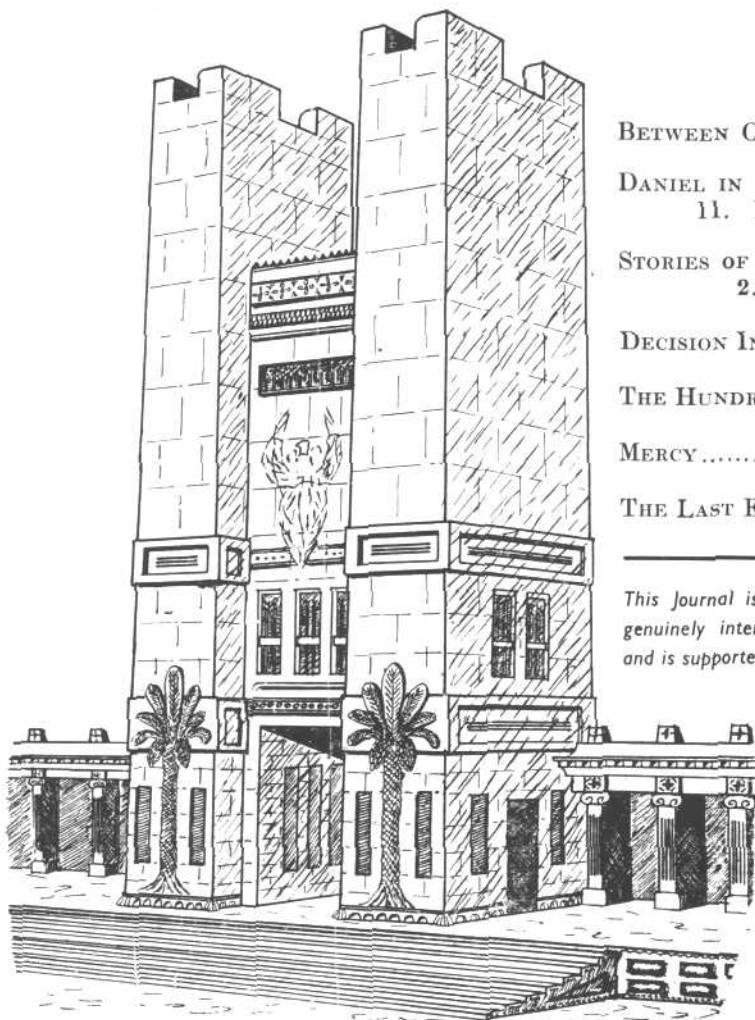
Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

## BETWEEN OURSELVES

The usual London Convention arranged by various London classes is again planned for this year, and will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, over the August Bank Holiday period, commencing on Saturday afternoon and continuing until Monday afternoon. Details can be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Cottage, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks. For accommodation please write Bro. G. B. Chapman, The Small House, Stoke Close, Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey.

### Gone from us

Bro. Biggs (*London*)

Sis. Musk (*Rossendale*)

*"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."*

## Visit of Bros. P. L. Read and A. L. Muir from U.S.A.

The following appointments have been made. Further details from Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

<i>Bro. A. L. Muir</i>			<i>Bro. P. L. Read</i>				
JULY		9	Anerley	AUG.	21	Warrington	
12-13	N. Ireland	10-11	Aldersbrook	3-5	London	22	Manchester
14-15	Belfast	12	Luton		Convention	24-25	Midlands
17	Wallasey	13	Oxford	7	Aylesbury		special
18-19	Manchester	14	Rugby	8	Luton	26	Welling
21	Warrington	15	Coventry	9	Oxford	27	Windsor
27-28	Cardiff	17-18	Midlands	10-11	Cardiff	28	Central London
30	Ipswich		special	13	Melton	29	Aldersbrook
31	Windsor	19	Melton		Mowbray	30	Anerley
AUG.			Mowbray	14	Lincoln		
3-5	London	20	Lincoln	15	Nottingham	SEPT.	
	Convention	21	Nottingham	16-18	Glasgow	1	Forest Gate
7	Central London	24-25	Glasgow	19-20	Belfast		
8	Welling						

## DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

### 11. Belshazzar's Feast

The Feast of Belshazzar is one of the best-known incidents of Scripture to the man in the street. This pagan orgy, interrupted at its height by the mysterious fingers of doom writing their dread sentence on the wall of the banquet hall, presaging utter disaster soon to come, has gripped the imagination of men in every age and in every land to which the story has penetrated. To such an extent is this true that the expression "the writing on the wall" has passed into a popular proverb, and nowadays many men use it habitually to describe the foreshadowing of events soon and certain to come perhaps without even knowing from what source the expression is derived.

The seventeenth year of the reign of Nabonidus and the twelfth year of his son Belshazzar's joint reign with him was destined to see the end of the Babylonian empire, the "head of gold" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The armies of Cyrus had been abroad in the land for six years past and were now fast closing in on the doomed city. Nearly two centuries previously the prophet Isaiah had foreseen this day and spoken of this man by name. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him . . . I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives . . . he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure . . ." (Isa. 44, 28 and 45, 1-13).

Although, in the days of Babylon, Persia was still an obscure province in the powerful empire of Media and owned allegiance to the kings of the Medes, yet for twenty years before Babylon's fall Cyrus the Persian had been steadily making himself the most powerful figure in the kingdom and by his military prowess had become in fact if not in name, the virtual ruler of Media. The second year of Belshazzar, when Daniel saw the vision of the two-horned ram, the greater horn coming up last, representing the kings of Media and Persia, commenced only a few months after Cyrus had waged successful war against Astyages the king of Media. Although Cyrus left a semblance of royalty to the defeated monarch, he was the real ruler from then on. As time passed, the victories of Cyrus reduced every country except Babylon to subjection, and the young king Belshazzar was left increasingly to guard the city of Babylon whilst his

father Nabonidus led his armies in the field against the Persian invader.

Daniel lived in the city during this period but evidently no longer held any kind of official Court office or rank. He was merely a private citizen. Belshazzar, not more than twenty years of age at his accession, was surrounded by an entirely different class of advisers. Historians describe him as weak, dissolute and licentious, and the story of the feast bears out that description. Daniel, comparing this youth's character with that of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, probably realised that even from the natural viewpoint the kingly dynasty of Babylon had had its day and could not stand for much longer against the disciplined energy of the invaders. Knowing how the outcome had already been prophesied by both Isaiah and Jeremiah in past years, and revealed to himself in more recent times, he must have waited calmly for the inevitable climax.

That climax came in the year 538 B.C. The Babylonian troops in the field were defeated and Nabonidus besieged in Borsippa, fourteen miles from Babylon. One of Cyrus' generals, Gubaru, marched swiftly to Babylon and laid siege to the city. And at that crucial time in the fortunes of the empire Belshazzar the king chose to hold a State banquet.

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, whilst he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father (grandfather) Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein . . . they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." (Ch. 5, v. 1-4).

Small wonder that Babylon fell so easily, when the man to whom had been entrusted its defence so dissipated the crucial hours. The enormous main hall of the royal palace shone with a blaze of light, the scintillating radiance from its many lamps illuminating the sculptured walls and the rich hangings. At the long tables sat the many guests, the nobility and gentry of Babylon, careless of the future, intent only on indulging themselves to the full in the encouragement offered them by the gay youth who was their king. Up on the dais, at the richest table of them all, sat Belshazzar himself

with his Court favourites and his wives and concubines, leading the revels into ever wilder scenes of excess and debauchery. In a final gesture of profanity he ordered the sacred vessels of the Temple of Jerusalem to be brought before him, to be defiled by liquor drunk to the honour of the false gods of Babylon.

The order given, the feast proceeded. The Temple of Bel-Marduk, the god of Babylon, in which those vessels had been placed by Nebuchadnezzar seventy years before, was nearly a mile from the palace and the messengers might well have had some difficulty in persuading the custodian priests to surrender their treasures. It might have been an hour later that they returned with their burden, an hour during which the silent, relentless Median soldiers steadily continued surrounding the city.

So the cups and flagons which once had ministered to the worship of God in His own Temple at Jerusalem were set out in that godless assembly and made the instruments of a wild orgy in which every false god known to the Babylonians — and they were many—was praised and venerated. The chaste craftsmanship which had been consecrated to the touch of holy priestly fingers became sullied now by the grasp of hands steeped in every kind of vice and immorality. And Heaven, looking down, uttered its decree: "This is the end."

*"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote against the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." (Vs. 5).*

The exactitude of Scripture is a constant marvel to the reverent mind. The remains of the Great Hall of the Royal Palace of Babylon are still there for anyone to inspect—ruined walls about four feet high enclosing a room a hundred and fifty feet long by fifty feet wide, the floor covered with the rubble and broken brickwork of the ruined building just as it has lain there for thousands of years — and mingled with the rubble there are pieces of white plaster, plaster which once covered those walls, the plaster mentioned in this verse, upon which those mysterious fingers wrote that fateful message. All who were present at that feast have long since returned to their dust; the empire which was theirs is no more; the glory that was Babylon has utterly passed away; but the white plaster upon which the cryptic message appeared that night in the year 538 B.C. lies still under the ruins, mute witness to the integrity and accuracy of the narrative we are following.

What deathly hush must have silenced that riotous assembly as the eyes of all present followed the king's terrified gaze to the point high up on the

wall where those fingers from another world deliberately traced their message. The brightly burning lamps cast the full brilliancy of their light upon the spot; this was no optical illusion, no trick of shadow and flickering flame. This was reality; there really was something up there, inscribing words of mysterious import. What could it mean? What strange intervention of the gods was this? Faces that a few moments ago had been flushed with wine now took on an unnatural pallor. Women who had been impudently flaunting their charms now drew their robes tightly around them and shivered. And still the hand wrote on.

"MENE; MENE; TEKEL; U-PHARSIN". The strange inscription stood revealed in its entirety. The hand was gone, but the characters remained, incised deeply into the plaster, written in the wedge-shaped cuneiform characters of Babylon. *"Numbered; Numbered; Weighed; Divided."* The words themselves were simple, everyday words; it was the circumstance of their appearance which affected the superstitious pagan king so that his *"countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."* Perhaps, at last, he began to recall the stories he had been told of the marvellous happenings that had taken place in the days of his royal grandfather, when the Most High God intervened to save his servants from the fiery furnace, and made the proud king like unto a beast, and restored him again a chastened man. Perhaps, too late, he thought of the Median army outside the city, and of his own father in their power. He looked again at the mystic writing, and shivered.

The customary routine was put into operation. Before long, that motley assembly, the astrologers, the wise men, the soothsayers, were all trooping into the hall to go through the familiar rigmarole. This particular problem should have been well within their province; the explanation of a few words that no one else present could understand would normally have been easy work for these gentlemen. But on this occasion the usual glib exposition was not forthcoming. Verse 8 says that "they could not read the writing," but this can hardly mean that they failed to comprehend a few Babylonian words written in Aramaic. Their normal educational level would have been quite equal to that. What is more likely the meaning of the phrase is that they could "make no sense" of the words themselves and, feeling that there was something behind this occurrence beyond their own understanding, preferred to have nothing to do with the matter. And that put King Belshazzar into a greater panic than he was in before.

It would seem that the hubbub and confusion into which the feast had degenerated came to the ears of the queen, and she made it her business to come in person to the banquet hall (verse 10). This queen was the wife of Nabonidus, who was the true king at the time, their son Belshazzar having been associated with his father twelve years earlier and given the title of joint king. Nitocris was the younger daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and it was by reason of her marriage to Nabonidus, who was not of royal blood, that the latter became king. In the days of her childhood she would of course have been closely acquainted with Daniel, some fifteen years her senior, as he attended on her royal father, and the glowing eulogy of Daniel's wisdom and understanding which is accredited to her in verses 11 and 12 indicates that Nitocris had by no means lost her esteem and respect for her father's one-time Chief Minister.

Belshazzar eagerly accepted his mother's advice, and Daniel was summoned to the palace. For more than twenty years he had been out of public life, and by now was evidently quite unknown at Court. This much is evident by the form of the king's greeting to Daniel when the aged prophet — now about eighty-four years of age — at length entered his presence. The first panic had probably subsided, but there would certainly be considerable anxiety mingled with the interest with which the assembled company looked upon this grave and dignified man of God, now standing in their midst.

Did Daniel's mind go back to that other scene in this same hall, nearly forty years earlier, when it had been his stern duty to proclaim the imminent judgment of God upon a previous king of Babylon, to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree, followed by his royal master's seven years of madness? But that judgment had been lifted and the king restored to his former glory. This time there would be no restoration; the disease was incurable; this was the end. The hour of doom had struck, and Babylon must surely fall.

The king offered honours to Daniel if he could interpret the writing; he should be "the third ruler in the kingdom" (verse 16). This is another unwitting testimony to the accuracy of the narrative, for Nabonidus was first and Belshazzar second in the kingdom, so that to be the third was the highest honour Belshazzar could offer. Quietly and respectfully Daniel indicated that he did not need gifts and rewards as inducement; he would unconditionally, make known the interpretation. But before doing so, Daniel had something else to say.

"O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father (grandfather) a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour" . . . . In measured

tones the prophet recapitulated the glory and power that had come to King Nebuchadnezzar, and then told how that when his heart was lifted up in pride, he was deposed, and driven from among men and made to dwell with the beasts, until he learned his lesson and knew that the Most High is the ruler of men and disposer of the affairs of nations. Then came the tremendous accusation "*and thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this . . . .*" There was no excuse of ignorance; Daniel found no redeeming feature in the position. The king was guilty, and it remained but to pass sentence. It is significant that when Daniel interpreted the dream of the tree to Nebuchadnezzar he put in a plea for repentance and change of conduct; "*it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*"; but to Belshazzar he addressed no word of hope or advice. He knew that the Divine decree had gone forth and could not be recalled, and he spoke in the light of that knowledge.

Now he turned to the mystic words, still showing up sharp and clear in the lamplight. He needed no supernatural guidance to understand their import and he did not have to retire to prayer to ask for the interpretation. Daniel's vision of the four world empires pictured by four wild beasts was twelve years in the past and during all those twelve years he had seen the enemy pressing more and more heavily upon Babylon. He knew the inherent weakness and corruption of Babylon and that Nabonidus, a rather indecisive man of over eighty years of age, and Belshazzar, a weak and dissolute monarch, were totally incapable of defending the empire against the active and warlike Cyrus. He knew that the enemy troops were outside the city, and the mysterious words glowed with meaning as he looked upon them.

MENE — measured. "*God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.*" The word in Babylonian commercial usage meant to measure an article and cut it off to a determined length or size, or to measure out an agreed sum of money to conclude a bargain. Here, on this fateful night, the empire of Babylon, the "head of gold" of the image, had run its full length and was to be cut off without compunction.

TEKEL — weighed. "*Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.*" A personal word to the king, that. Daniel had only to look around him at the evidences of the orgy which had been so abruptly interrupted, and reflect that this man should by right have been actively engaged in the defence of his city, to find the right words which fitted this part of the inscription.

PERES. Most readers are puzzled by the appearance of "peres" as the fourth word in vs. 28

when in vs. 25 it is given as "upharsin." The explanation is that "peres" is the singular form of the word of which "pharsin" is the plural. The "U" in front of "pharsin" is the conjunction "and", so that the inscription literally read "*Numbered, Weighed and Divided.*" The word "peres" means "divisions" and the plural form "pharsin" by a play on similar sounding words could be made to sound like the word for "Persians." Hence Daniel was able to say on the basis of this word "*Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.*"

It was probably pure superstition which led Belshazzar immediately to honour his pledge to make Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom. He had flouted and dishonoured the Most High God and now that very God had caused this message to be sent him, this message of immediate and irretrievable disaster. Perhaps if he honoured the prophet of that God and restored him to the position he had occupied in the days of Babylon's glory, when all nations rendered submission and tribute, the threatened disaster might even yet be averted. It might be that something of that nature was in the king's mind. We do not know. We only know that even while these things were being done and said in that brightly lit magnificent palace, the warriors of Media and Persia had gained access to the city in the darkness and were making their way through the streets, ruthlessly beating down such feeble resistance as was being offered by the citizens.

It is said by some scholars that the Hebrew expression in vs. 30, "*In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain*" does not demand that his death occurred on the same night as the feast, but only that it was at a time not too far remote. On the other hand, Herodotus and other historians declare that Babylon was captured at a time when the city was given over to feasting, and that Gubaru,

the general who actually captured the city — for Cyrus was some distance away at the time — made his way to the palace and slew the king with many of his courtiers. It is very probable therefore that after Daniel had retired from the banqueting hall, and the company had begun to disperse, a swarm of armed men burst in and the last scene of the drama was played out to the end.

It was a long time before Babylon perished altogether. Daniel was yet to serve first a Median and then a Persian king for a few brief years before he was in his turn gathered to his fathers. He was yet to have the joy of seeing his countrymen leave for Judea to restore their native land. Some twenty years later, long after Daniel's death, Babylon made a final bid for independence under Belshazzar's younger brother, named Nebuchadnezzar after his illustrious grandfather, but Darius Hystaspes the Persian king laid siege to the city and this time destroyed the towering walls which had been the city's pride and confidence. Thus were fulfilled the words of Jeremiah, "*The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire.*" (Jer. 51, 58). The river Euphrates changed its course and silted up, and the sea-going merchant vessels could no longer reach the city; two centuries later Seleucus the Greek king built his new city of Seleucia on the Tigris and the commercial importance of Babylon vanished; the citizens gradually drifted away to other homes and by the second century of the Christian era the great city which had called itself "the lady of kingdoms" was reduced to a barren waste of derelict and decaying buildings, the homes of jackals and owls.

*"How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken; how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations."*

To be continued

## Resting in Christ

"Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be moulded more and more after the life of Christ.

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your

frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell on self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love — this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness."

Bro. H. Schooley.

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## STORIES OF SALVATION

### 2. A Man of the Pharisees

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A man walks quickly through the dark, narrow streets of Jerusalem, with his cloak pulled tightly around him to obscure his identity. He is evidently a wealthy man, of noble birth and an important citizen of this ancient town. He was anxious to pass unnoticed for his mission was not a public engagement and he was apparently rather retiring by nature in spite of his office. He stopped at a house and requested to speak to the prophet of Nazareth who was lodging there during the Pass-over festival. Jesus' ear was ever open to those who genuinely needed his help, and sympathetically he listened to the ruler's enquiry. Nicodemus, a leader of the Pharisees' party and member of the Sanhedrin, had been interested in the work and preaching which Jesus had been doing. Perhaps he was already somewhat persuaded concerning the claims of the Man from Nazareth but was rather disturbed by the Temple incident which had resulted in considerable animosity among some of the religious dignitaries (John 2, 13-17). He may have been anxious for Jesus' welfare and certainly for the maintenance of order in Jerusalem. The normal population of the city would be swollen by many thousands during the period of the feast and the Jewish rulers would not want the religious fervour of the masses to rise too high and thus endanger the peace.

There may be some significance in the word "we" used in John 3, 2. It could be that the sect of the Pharisees or just a part of it were determined to discover the true nature and purpose of Jesus' work. Unlike the Sadducees, there were periods during the Master's ministry when their bitter opposition abated, particularly when their rival party was thrown up in its true light by Jesus. Whatever brought the Pharisee to the house where Jesus lodged that night, the man in high office preferred not to be seen there in the broad light of day.

Nicodemus opened the conversation in the true style of a diplomat, paying Jesus the compliment of being a teacher sent from God. Our Master, also true to form, cut right across the flattery and went to the point on the basic issues of religion. Nicodemus was a highly religious man. He could not have maintained his place in the religious sect without scrupulous attention to ritual. He would have an accurate knowledge of Hebrew history and be well versed in the Mosaic Law. His ability to quote the Jewish Scriptures would put many a

modern minister to shame. Undoubtedly he had kept the law well and was a fine, upright son of Abraham in the eyes of his fellows. His sound judgment would be very beneficial to the Jewish people and his pure speech and conduct would contrast strongly against the background of hypocrisy and immorality of his day. Any personal reasons for coming to Jesus were obviously to improve his already well matured religious life.

Jesus showed him that his present standing before men, as a ruler and respectable religious man, meant absolutely nothing in the sight of God. All who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven would have to become as little babies, making a fresh start in life, with a re-valuation of spiritual things. However good they may have appeared to be according to earthly standards, that was a matter of the past to be forgotten. Those who were citizens of God's kingdom must enter it not on the basis of their own virtue and knowledge, but through new life, founded upon Jesus Christ.

The teaching which the Lord explained to Nicodemus is one of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. Like the ruler in Israel it is possible to belong to a religious sect or movement and thereby participate in its ritual and to understand its teachings, and yet not become a child of God. There are many like Nicodemus today and not all such are wealthy and influential leaders. Like the Pharisees they enjoy an outward respectability of religious belief, many going so far as to dedicate their lives to the service of God, shunning the attractions of this world. Yet all of these valuable aspects of discipleship to Jesus do not in themselves constitute a gateway to heaven.

Only as we are prepared to die to self and to our former sinful life, and yield ourselves wholly to the will and purpose of God, can he implant within us "new life" by His spirit and through the blood of His dear Son.

Paul had passed through this experience from very much the same position that Nicodemus occupied when he visited Jesus. Before his conversion to the Christian faith, Paul had stood as one of the most worthy and most promising young men in all Israel. He must have been the hope and inspiration of the Pharisees. In every respect he had the qualities of a great and good leader in their faith. Judging from his ability to expound the Gospel and relate it to the Hebrew Scriptures, he had remark-

able ability as a teacher. But after meeting with Jesus on the Damascus road, and finding new life in Christ, Saul of Tarsus discovered that all the old glories faded, his pride and zeal wilted and that everything of the past was utterly worthless. In their place grew up a humble faith and radiant power. Instead of boasting in his own knowledge and abilities, he found fellowship with Christ to be the great absorbing interest of his life.

Paul, like many another before him, and many another who has lived since, found the way of Christ somewhat bewildering at first, in the light of his upbringing and education. He may well have echoed the words of Nicodemus during those days of blindness in Damascus and have asked "How can these things be?" To suddenly find out that all of life's past achievements are worthless is no light thing to men of the stature and quality of Paul and Nicodemus. Yet whether we be great or small in the eyes of our fellows, the issue must be squarely faced, as we weigh up the ambitions and rewards of this world against the spiritual wealth of eternity.

God does not rush us into these things however. Time for prayer and reflection is given, in order that matters can be seen in their true perspective. Both of these men of Israel must have spent a long time counting the cost. Nicodemus does not seem to have made up his mind immediately, for a little further on in the Gospel of John we catch another glimpse of him, this time not sitting chatting with Jesus about entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, but among his brethren of the Sanhedrin. (John 7, 46-53). The officers of the Temple guard had borne witness that "Never man spake like this man". Perhaps Nicodemus agreed with them as he pondered his evening visit to the prophet of Galilee. Anyway, by this time he had summoned sufficient courage to question the fairness of the accusations made against Jesus. He may not have thrown in his lot with the disciples, but his conscience impelled him to be just.

We have one final look at Nicodemus before he disappears completely from the New Testament story. It is at the tragic scene of the crucifixion. The disciples, who have stood close to Jesus' side during His life and even at His arrest, have now fled. Two men, gentlemen of high rank, who previously have remained in the shadows, afraid lest they should be ostracised because of their sympathies with the Nazarene, step forward. Publicly they do a last service to Him who in His life time they held in secret regard. It is no small task which they undertake (John 20, 38-42) in the burial of the Galilean prophet who has died as a criminal. Yet in the face of previous fears and possible ex-

communication from public life, Joseph and Nicodemus express their love for Jesus in a most beautiful manner.

The conversation which took place when Nicodemus visited Jesus by night had slowly but surely borne its fruit. Perhaps the days which followed would give further evidence of this. How remarkable were the individual contacts which Jesus had with people in different walks of life. On occasions He preached to a vast crowd and many followed Him, but just as readily they turned away in their numbers too, when He did not speak and act as it pleased them. Our Saviour was more, much more, than a mere demagogue who could turn the hearts of the masses. He loved men and women as individuals and preached some of his most searching sermons to one person here or a handful of followers there. Salvation is like that, not a matter of mass production. Jesus still speaks to the heart of each individual, calling them to repentance and discipleship. His voice may be heard through the lips of a disciple or read from the pen of one of His servants. He may call us while engaged on some noble work or high office, and may speak to us in humbler circumstances and in the midst of our selfish and sinful life.

But there has been no change in the principle behind his remarks, nor any lessening of the need to hearken to His warning, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." This is not just the pursuit of some good moral cause nor the imitation of the fine example of living which Jesus gave to us. He asks for no less than death to all our high ambitions, and a new life begun within us which is inspired and empowered from above. Then, and only then, shall we attain the moral and spiritual characteristics of the Master, for by His grace and through day-to-day fellowship with Him, can we be like Him.

Whether or not the remainder of the third chapter of John's Gospel from verse 14 is a continuation of Jesus' remarks to Nicodemus is not clear from the record. It may constitute Jesus' teaching at some other time which the writer found helpful to include under the same heading. There is in those later verses and in the chapters which follow a clearly defined principle regarding salvation, which the writers of the New Testament enlarged upon after Pentecost. Jesus speaks of it as "belief on the Son of God". Further on He illustrates what he means by saying "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you. (John 6, 53).

It is a strange thing that a people whose national language was so pictorial and who were brought up on literature steeped in imagery and figures of

speech should find Jesus' words so difficult to understand. What stubbornness of comprehension made Nicodemus interpret literally the words "Except a man be born again"? It is difficult to realise how thoroughly materialistic were the teachers of God's holy people Israel. They were blind and most of them had no desire to see the light of the Gospel. As expressed at the time of the ascension by the disciples, the one hope of all Jewry was upon the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. Somehow the idea of new spiritual life, of fellowship with God and development of characteristics like His, was to them an utterly foreign thought and cut right across the longings of their fleshly craving and patriotic zeal.

The principle enunciated in Jesus' words to Nicodemus is true of every age. That is why, in part at least, the Jewish leaders should have understood their meaning. There is a time in the life of every one who turns to God, when there is a "right about turn" and a definite refusal of the things of this world and its god. They look instead to their Creator in faith for life and guidance. Abraham's departure from Ur and Moses' rejection of Egyptian princely life are perhaps the clearest Old Testament examples.

We, who live nineteen centuries from the time Jesus spoke the word to Nicodemus, can so easily take for granted the ideas which stumbled Jewish leaders, that we may miss their practical application to our own lives. We ought to ask ourselves the

searching questions which must inevitably spring from a study of John 3. Were we in fact "born again" of the spirit or did we consecrate to a sect, a service or a doctrine?

The same law will operate in the earthly Kingdom. Not until the former way of life under the conditions prevalent today, amid the kingdom of this world, has been genuinely repented of, and an approach has been made toward God through their Saviour Jesus, can men really expect to "live" in the Kingdom. Their former loyalties to selfishness which controls the kingdom of Satan, must be fully surrendered before citizenship in Christ's Kingdom can be granted.

As men and women rise from the tomb, they will enjoy perfect physical and mental power. The moral characteristics, however, of their former lives will remain until they consciously reject their sins. Jesus said that "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse." (Matt. 9, 16). Here again our Lord was stating an eternal truth which applies equally well to this age and the age to come. The loyalties to a materialistic age will have to be repudiated and selfishness must give place to a heart devoted to the will of God, acceptable in the Saviour. Thus, with life fully born anew, they will be able to live for and by the One who gave them life. To them He will become "The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

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## DECISION IN CHARACTER BUILDING

A word from the past

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*"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, follow him." (1 Kings, 18, 21).*

Multitudes are in an undecided condition of mind, not only as respects the worship of God, and as respects their faith, but also in regard to the common affairs of life. They are not devoid of good intentions, good resolutions, hopes and ambitions; but these are rather vague and shapeless. Their thoughts, their intentions, have not crystallised. As a result they are making little progress and accomplishing little good, either in or for themselves or others. Even worldly people who manifest great decision in business and social and moral matters lack decision in religious affairs.

At the same time, even those who have been so highly favoured of God that the eyes of their understanding have been opened—that they have

caught glimpses of the glorious things in reservation for the Lord's faithful, are frequently lax and measurably indifferent to these wonderful things which should induce them to zeal and inspire them with courage and strength. What is the difficulty? Why do they not accomplish more? The answer frequently should be that it is because of indecision. They should decide promptly, but they hesitate—holding important questions in abeyance, and continuing to balance and to weigh matters which they already determined are right. They halt between two opinions; they hesitate to take the Lord's Word fully and entirely, and to walk boldly forward in the right direction, even when they clearly discern the footsteps of Jesus and the proper course for them as His followers. As one point after another comes up and is thus set aside indefinitely, the whole Christian course of that individual is stagnated and

fresh duties and privileges as they appear, are stopped in the way by the muddle of mind which unsettled questions of years produce; thus indecision has more or less hindered them all their lives. By and by there is such an accumulation of undecided points and matters that they feel the case is almost hopeless, become discouraged, grow cold, indifferent, and perhaps fall completely away from the faith and its service.

A part of the mistake is in the exercise of a wrong kind of caution—proper enough in respect to earthly affairs, in which we have to guard our interests against unscrupulous fellows; but out of place, impedimenta, in our dealings with God. This wrong caution says—Do nothing until you see how it will all end—I must walk by mental sight at least. But this kind of worldly wisdom will not do, in dealing with God. He makes the rules by which we may approach Him and progress in His favour. One of His rules is, that every item of truth we learn must be accepted and acted upon before we are ready for more. They that receive the truth in the love of it, will surely serve it with all the decision they can command and acquire—piece by piece, as they receive it. They who on receiving truth balance it and ponder long whether it will ultimately cost too much, thus give evidence that their love for the truth is not great enough—that it is mixed with selfishness. Such must cultivate love of the truth until it outweighs all other things, else they will not be fit for the Kingdom. The Lord's charge against those who are about to fall in the present testing time, is that "They received not the truth in the love of it." (2 Thes. 2, 10-12).

After Israel had reached the promised land, Joshua sought to bring them to such a point of decision. He called them together, recited to them the Lord's favour and blessing enjoyed thus far, and expressed himself in noble language saying, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Josh. 24, 15). So dear friends, we who realise that the Lord has been blessing, guiding and sustaining us in the past, should come to a full, positive decision as respects our course of life. We should not be content for one moment longer to go along indefinitely, serving whiles the Lord, and whiles Mammon (selfishness). We should settle the matter at once and for all time, that we will be the Lord's.

The very fact of coming to a positive decision is a great blessing, and a great help in the formation of character. Every time we come to a decision, on any question, it strengthens mind and character and makes us that much more ready for another test—along some other line, perhaps. One decision for the right prepares the way for others in the same direction, just as hesitancy, indecision upon

one point prepares us for hesitancy upon all points, and more or less stops our Christian progress and character-building.

We are not advocating rashness—the doing of something without a reasonable, proper amount of consideration. But we are urging upon the Lord's people the cultivation of promptness, decision of mind, in respect to questions we have sufficiently examined. Some things may of necessity require pondering, but many things in life require no such delay to reach a proper decision. The majority of the questions which present themselves before the bar of our minds could be decided in a moment; and the less time we take in reaching a decision on such problems the better for us, and for the upbuilding of proper character in this regard.

We need to have some touchstone, as it were, some matter which will help us to decide, which will enable the mind to reach a decision quickly. This touchstone should be God's will; so that to perceive the Lord's will in respect to any question would be to settle it—as quickly as discerned. There should be no thought of opposing the divine will. There should be no temporising, no haggling to see what a thing would cost, once we discern that it is the Lord's will. There should be no further question about the rejection of any matter which we discern to be contrary to the Lord's will; no matter how enticing, no matter how much of profit or of advantage there may be connected therewith.

Ability to decide quickly, and to decide always on the right side, what the Lord's will is, requires some experience and discipline; but the sooner we begin the sooner we will become proficient; the more energetically we set ourselves to know the Lord's will and to do it, and to show Him by our promptness that we delight to do His will, the better and the quicker will we find our characters established on proper lines.

There are many gods presenting their claims to us, and seeking our reverence. To some, perhaps to the vast majority, self is the most prominent idol and false god; to others it is fame; to others the family; to others wealth. But all these false gods are more or less related, and the one name, Mammon, selfishness, is appropriate to them all. It requires not a great deal of discernment to decide that none of these ambitions is worthy of us, and that the worship of our hearts and the sacrifices of life should all be to the true God.

The Scriptures appeal to us along these lines of prompt decision, and it is because these appeals are neglected, not obeyed, that many of the Lord's people are so lean and so undeveloped both in knowledge and in character. Mark the appeal, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The suggestion is that the matter be not

put off for another day. We cannot tell how distinctly we will hear the voice of the Lord's providence speaking to us to-morrow. On the contrary, we know that even as we may become accustomed to an earthly call, or an earthly alarm, so that by and by it would cease to awaken us, so our spiritual ears become accustomed to the important messages reaching them from the Lord's Word. They will have less and less weight and influence, and will become less and less helpful to us in proportion as we neglect them and fail to act upon them. Does not this explain the fact that some who have newly come into the truth, are farther along both in faith and good works than some whose ears were blest long ago?

We are in the beginning of a new year, and now is a favourable time for us to make good resolutions. One of these should surely be that henceforth we will cultivate decision of character—that when we hear the voice of the Lord we will respond promptly. So that when we see a work of the Lord, which we have the privilege of attending to, it will be performed not only willingly and well, but also speedily. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver"—a prompt giver — not merely as respects money matters, as this text is generally applied, but in respect to all of our little offerings and sacrifices to Him and for His cause' sake. If we would be pleasing to the Lord and grow in His favour and in nearness to Him, we must bring our hearts more and more into the condition that He approves, that He loves, namely, heartiness, cheerfulness, promptness in every service we may render. The trouble with many Christians is, that they have not thoroughly learned what a great privilege we of this Gospel age enjoy—in being permitted to present our little sacrifices and self-denials to the Lord, under the assurance that our imperfect works shall be acceptable through Christ to God.

This is the spirit that all of the Lord's over-coming people should have. All do not have this character or quality of disposition by nature; but in proportion as we lack, the Lord will reckon to us of His own merit to compensate, if He finds in us the spirit, the will, the disposition, to thus follow the example of Jesus and the apostles and all the faithful. If we are weak in this respect, lacking in this quality of decision and firmness of character, we need to be more alert, and to go the more frequently to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and to find grace to help. But those who are naturally weak, and who yet have tried this matter according to the lines here laid down—who have sought to cultivate this principle of character and decision and firmness for the right, give abundant testimony that the Lord is their helper and that in thus following the directions of His Word and the examples of faith-

fulness, they have become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. May this be a blessed year for all the faithful in Christ Jesus, along the lines of character-building, energy and firmness for the right and for the truth, as God grants us to see these.

Let us not forget that it is just such a class that the Lord is seeking, to be the Bride and joint-heir of His Son. He is not looking for those who are perfect in this respect; for there is a weakness along this line throughout the whole human family; there is none perfect in this or other respects, none fit for the Kingdom by nature. It will encourage us, perhaps, to remember that the Lord is taking the weak things of the world and making them strong, and that in proportion as we submit our wills to His will we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, and that He thus works in us to will and to do His good pleasure in the establishment of strong, decisive characters, through the promises of His Word. To it, as represented in Jesus, He exhorts us to look, while we endeavour to run with patience the race set before us, trusting in Him who has redeemed us and called us, and who has promised to be our ever-present helper in every time of need.

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It is easier to pray than it is to praise. Prayer is the act of asking God for something. Praise is the act of thanking God for something, perhaps that which you have not yet received. Prayer is taking your words of want to God; praise is taking God at His words. He has promised us many good things, among them to answer our prayers. If we really believe Him; if we are really willing to rest on His words of promise, why should we not praise?

\* \* \*

The motto of Spurgeon's College shows a hand holding a cross. "Teneo et teneor": "I both hold and am held." It is fine to hold the cross; it is far finer to be held by it. Jude's word "keep" (v. 21) is a necessary injunction, but Peter's word "kept" reveals the grace which makes the other possible.

We hold the cross, but we are held by the cross. We keep ourselves in the love of God, but we are kept by the power of God.

\* \* \*

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll.  
Leave thy low-vaulted past.  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.

## THE HUNDRETH PSALM

An  
Exposition

This psalm is one to be sung before the Throne of God. It is an expression of worship designed to be uttered in the Divine Presence. It is not given to us, as it was to Isaiah, to see in vision the Temple of God opened in Heaven, and to behold the Lord, high and lifted up, His glory filling the sanctuary. It is given to us to approach and worship Him in the beauty of holiness, to draw near in spirit and behold Him by the eye of faith. This Psalm is one of those "spiritual songs" written aforetime for our encouragement and strength, and it is in the spirit of songs such as this that we can, each one of us, "appear before God in Zion".

Now it is because this is a Psalm to be sung in God's presence that it opens with praise; and more than that, with jubilant praise. No restrained, subdued harmony of quiet notes, this. No softly sung solo, audible to the ears of the faithful few and reaching no farther. This is a universal acclamation of joy, resounding to the ends of the earth. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with thanksgiving". The call is a general one; all peoples, nations and languages are bidden to join in this anthem of praise. Gladness and thanksgiving is the keynote; it would seem that sorrow and sighing have fled away. In this we have the key to the application of the Psalm dispensationally. It fits no Age so well as the Millennial Age, the day of the Kingdom of God upon earth, the day when "the trees of the wood shall rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth." (Psa. 96, 13). Then will be fulfilled the words of Isaiah "It shall be said in that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation'" (Isa. 25, 9). That day is to be one of universal rejoicing and the words of this Psalm will find their richest fulfilment in its light.

But although the words are thus shown to be specially applicable to that future day of blessedness there must be remembered that they can have and do have a rich fulfilment now. True, the nations do not now make a joyful noise unto the Lord neither do all peoples come into his presence with thanksgiving. It would be more correct to say of them that they make a discordant noise unto the god of this world and enter into his slavery with lamentation. But in this world of to-day, dark and

evil as it is, there do exist outposts of the new Kingdom, little communities of God's ambassadors, ministers of reconciliation. Because those ambassadors represent the new world that shall be, they must needs accept the obligation and privilege of fulfilling the exhortation in this psalm, of making a joyful noise before the Lord and coming into his presence with thanksgiving.

In the literal sphere audible praise occupies a very important place in Christian worship. There are many who cannot take place in discourse and study, or cannot offer and lead in prayer, who can join with all their heart and soul in the voicing of praise. What is usually termed a "praise service", one in which the entire congregation joins in the singing of one favourite hymn after another, is occasionally despised or spoken lightly of, by some, but it is in reality a very important and profitable form of corporate worship and fellowship. Such a service, well conducted, is a spiritual stimulus to many devoted souls whose voices are otherwise rarely heard in the assemblies. And if those voices are sometimes a little out of tune, or grate somewhat harshly upon the ear of one who has been trained to appreciate the technique of good music, of what real consequence is that? We may be sure that by the time those imperfectly rendered songs have mounted the heights and echoed through the halls of Heaven all the harshness and lack of tune has been smoothed away and only the perfect rhythm of pure praise remains.

We need not be afraid of heartiness in our songs of praise. There is a dignity about the Truth but it is not the dignity of a cold, lifeless statue. It is the dignity of a warm, vibrant, living thing, animating all with which it comes in contact and ennobling all that it touches. So when the situation calls for praise to be loud, then let the praise be loud. "Praise him upon the loud cymbals" said the Psalmist, and then, upon reflection, decided that he was not being thorough-going enough, and so "Praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals" he concluded (Psa. 150, 5). It was something of this that the Apostle must have had in mind when he spoke of our "singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord" (Eph. 5, 19) for there are high-sounding cymbals in our hearts too, and even although they are of a kind that only God can hear they are there to be used.

It is now that a new note of urgency appears in the Psalm. "Know ye", cries the singer, "know ye, that the Lord, he is God. It is he that hath

*made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*" These sentiments do not command general acceptance to-day. To an increasing degree men endeavour to persuade themselves that they owe nothing to God, no need of gratitude for the blessings of life and intelligence, no acknowledgment of the rightness of His laws, no service and no praise. They will not know the Lord, that He is God, and as they gather together to worship at the shrine of Darwin they chant in unison "it is we that hath made us, we ourselves." God looks down from His Heaven upon them. Who can doubt that there is a gentle, indulgent smile of tolerance as He watches these self-opinionated and so ignorant children whose whole world revolves around their own constricted circle of vision. They will know better one day, and God is quite content to wait.

These verses, also, then, point to the future Age as the time of their application. It is then that men will know that the Lord is God; then that the man-made theories of modernism and humanism and every other "-ism" that at present "darkens counsel without knowledge" will dissolve and vanish away like the early morning mists before the sun, and men come to realise at last that they live, and move, and have their being, in God. Then it is they become conscious of the great truth that they are the sheep of His pasture. The symbol of the shepherd is the predominant one of the Millennial Age. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd . . . and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40, 11). Men will realise that relationship between themselves and their God, and will, for the most part at any rate, come willingly under that rule of the iron rod which is the rule of the shepherding rod, a firm and wise, and yet a loving and benevolent guidance towards God's way of life.

What wonder then that the Psalmist, seeing these things, sings exultantly "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Be thankful unto him and bless his name. For the Lord is good, and his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." There are several "gates" into which, in a metaphorical sense, man may enter and come face to face with God. In the days of Israel there was a Tabernacle, a tent of curtains with a surrounding enclosure, and at the eastern end of that enclosure a "gate", a way of entry to the sacred mysteries that lay within. But not any man of Israel could enter by that gate; only the Levites. Thus was pictured the great truth that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11, 6). That gate represented the entrance to the condition of justification by faith

enjoyed by those who have accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour. To such the world has commenced to be left behind; they are pressing forward to a life of service for God. It is with thanksgiving and praise that the advance is made and such can very truly "enter into his gates" in that attitude of mind. But inside the "court" of the Tabernacle another "gate", the "porch" or "door" of the tent itself, stands before the believer, and entrance through that door denotes consecration unto death, a presenting our whole selves living offerings, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service (Rom. 12, 1). Even here the progress is not ended, for the sequel to that consecrated life is entrance into "Heaven itself" through yet another door, the "veil" which is the Tabernacle dividing the Holy from the Most Holy. The believer, progressing from sin to righteousness and from time to eternity, must pass these "three" gates in succession, but he has good reason to pass through them all with thanksgiving and praise.

There are gates, too, through which mankind will be invited to pass, when the due time has come. "Open ye the gates" cries the prophet (Isa. 26, 2) "that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." What gates are these? They are the gates of the Millennial Age, the portals through which men will pass from the darkness of this present evil world to the light and warmth of the future Kingdom. John the Revelator in his vision saw the new Jerusalem come down to earth and those gates flung open that all of mankind — save the unclean, the wilfully wicked—could enter in. They will enter with thanksgiving and praise. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isa. 35, 10).

So, at long last, men will realise that "the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations." Goodness, mercy, truth; these are the distinguishing characteristics of the Divine dealings with men during the Millennial Age. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," sang the Psalmist (Psa. 85, 10), and Isaiah, foreseeing the eventual outcome of the Divine Plan, cried ecstatically "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32, 17). One great song of universal praise and thanksgiving will ascend to the Father when at length all men have tasted of His mercies, all sin has been driven far away, evil doers have perished from the earth, and the Lord Jesus has said to His redeemed ones "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

## MERCY

A Doctrinal  
Essay

Repetition for teaching purposes is an art to be practised only by the best writers; otherwise it is to be avoided, as being monotonous and very distracting to a reader. But a lesson well and truly taught is the one that bears continual repetition, as with the Ransom of our Lord. So strongly does the Psalmist feel on this subject of Mercy, that the words "*For his mercy endureth for ever*" are repeated twenty six times in Psalm 136. As each detail of God's Purpose is recited in that Psalm, the reader feels himself echoing, with our beloved Psalmist, those lovely words "*For His Mercy Endureth for Ever.*"

Doesn't the reading "*Blessed be the Lord God of my Master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth . . .*" cheer the heart when we realise that the story (Gen. 24, 1-28) is part of God's Eternal Purpose? Even so do we find joy in Jacob's story. After so many years he sends to Esau to say how the Lord has prospered him, and to find grace in Esau's sight. But the messengers return to say "*We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee and four hundred men with him.*" Then the threat of Esau at the beginning of those many years loomed in the mind of Jacob "Then will I slay my brother Jacob" and "he was greatly afraid and distressed." Such fear will quicken the mind sometimes and produce wise plans (Gen. 32, 8). After plans are laid, however, the fear remains that they might not succeed. It is then we find the consolation of prayer. So Jacob prayed, commencing "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." His calm that followed produced a better plan (verses 13 to 23) and the conclusion gladdens our hearts "The elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25, 23). "And Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." (Gen. 33, 4). Mercy and Truth!

We read of Mercy and Truth in that order. Why is the order reversed when the Scriptures speak of Covenant and Mercy? There is a first Mercy here and a last. It was Abraham who was called in Mercy, and he manifested the great faith that produced the "I will Bless" covenant. Because God would keep that covenant He entered into the Law Covenant and again we are cheered as we read "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people: for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and

because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him." (Deut. 7, 7-9). That is the invariable order, so it seems, and the reason suggested is that Covenants may be broken — the children of Israel certainly broke the Law Covenant. Even so, Mercy still endures.

May we reflect a little on the reasons why our Lord Jesus would not judge? Verses one to eleven of the eighth chapter of John's gospel tell an interesting story, viewed from this standpoint, and the words "*Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*" shew no criminal judgment. At Luke 12, 13-15, we shall find another story over what may be called a disputed Will, and again our Lord Jesus would not judge. The reason given is "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3, 17). That reason places Mercy first, Judgment afterwards, as the Light of Truth dawns.

This general picture, studied closely, will cheer and gladden the heart of any honest person. But there is a particular picture, that causes a sense of supreme reverence and awe. It starts "If God be for us!" — a particular class?

Not really. Each and every earnest Christian recognises himself or herself in that passage (Rom. 8, 31-39) and is saying in his heart "If God be for me." This is the living word of God speaking to us. Its personal application to each one of us, makes that word inhere in our hearts; and so, when all other words fail, God's Holy Word lives, and we can echo the remainder of the sentence "who can be against us?" Even as the Psalmist says "For His Mercy Endureth for ever." Once we are within the framework of God's Mercy, it is surely a delight of soul to be able to say "Who can be against us?"; "Who can condemn?"

And the solace, "It is Christ that died": all, in God's Mercy, is forgiven. Do we live? "*Yea, rather, Christ is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.*" As all in Adam was forgiven, so when you become a true disciple, all continues forgiven by reason of that constant intercession on our behalf. As we sing, God is Wisdom, God is Love. God in Mercy

judgeth me! And this is the Inspiration that overwhelms the heart of our beloved Apostle Paul, when he says, and we say with him, in realising God's Mercy; Who then? "Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ?" and every honest heart echoes Paul's words "I am persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

However, this very persuasion makes Paul say (Rom. 9) "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, . . . I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were separated from Christ, for my brethren according to the flesh . . . to whom pertaineth the adoption, . . . glory . . . covenants . . . the giving of the law . . . the service of God . . . the promises . . . the fathers . . . and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." Paul could wish himself separated from Christ for their sakes. What Grace! But alas, what heavy sorrow! The shock has to be fully understood. What shock? "God will have mercy on whom He will have Mercy." First "Don't think the Word of God hath taken none effect, for they are not *all* Israel, which are of Israel." Remember the promise (Gen. 21, 12), "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Second, we have to realise that "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." This would be profound to those Israelites who had relatives and friends who had not accepted Christ. Yet they had to realise another election than that of the flesh. Even before Jacob and Esau could commit sin, before they were born in fact, God had declared that "the elder shall serve the younger." Thus this new seed of promise will be the leaders, and the elder seed (of the law) will serve the leaders. "What shall we say then?" That this is not right. Would you so contend? "Is there unrighteousness with God?" Never. Never. "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" and Paul now confesses, "So then, it is not of him that willeth" (the one who claims to be a chosen child of Israel) "nor of him that runneth" (namely, the one who proselytes to be a child of Israel) "but of God that sheweth mercy." We cannot reply to God. It is given us instead to reflect upon the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy. God hardens the heart of Pharaoh and vindicates His Name by shewing His Power. "Therefore hath He mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth." We are all helpless before such power. We are the clay. He is the Potter. Shall we be a vessel "to honour" or to "dishonour?" No, no, we shall be a "vessel of mercy", "safe in the arms

of Jesus." So then, God will shew his calling. As it is written "What if God . . . endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and 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?" What, indeed? Don't you know that "God will finish the work . . . in righteousness," and we shall say "that the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith, but Israel, which followed after the Law of Righteousness hath not attained to the Law of Righteousness, because they sought it not by faith . . . for they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion, a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be confounded", because he is in God's Mercy.

We continue to read through Romans, chapters 10 and 11 and realise the profundity of the larger argument Paul brings forth in defence of his sorrow. The Gentiles were called in unrighteousness, came to faith, even through the shadow of unbelief: the Israelites were concluded in unbelief until the fullness of the Gentiles came in. Then we discern that Gentiles and Israelites alike were concluded in unbelief . . . all, that is, who did not accept the Divine High Calling. This realisation brings another inspired declaration from Paul, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord or who hath been his counsellor, or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him and through Him and to Him, are all things, to Whom be glory forever."

There is a first Mercy to the Israelites and a last Mercy to the Gentiles. A remnant of Israel went into this last Mercy because they accepted the Truth in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Thus Mercy and Truth prevailed. The covenant was broken, but Mercy interceded for the Israelites. And the Divine Splendour in the mind of Paul is that God in this way shews that "He has Mercy upon all." So we value those "Requirements", recognising that "He hath shewed thee O man what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6, 8).

---

"The primary characteristic of knowledge is not that it is for ever changing, but that it is for ever growing." (Sir James Jeans).

## THE LAST ENEMY

A  
Meditation

*"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."*  
(I Cor. 15, 26).

What an enemy!

Reflecting back over childhood days when youthful vigour made life joyous, and our hearts were filled with joy and gladness for the fruitful seasons God gave us, we indeed thought how good it was to be alive. When we played in the woods, and walked in the lovely lanes, we indeed thought "God is good."

*Yes, God is good — in earth and sky,  
From ocean depths and spreading wood,  
Ten thousand voices seem to cry:  
God made us all, and God is good.  
The sun that keeps his trackless way,  
And downward pours his golden flood;  
Night's sparkling hosts, all seem to say —  
In accents clear, that God is good.  
The merry birds prolong the strain,  
Their song with every spring renewed;  
And balmy air, and falling rain,  
Each softly whispers: God is good.  
I hear it in the rushing breeze;  
The hills that have for ages stood,  
The echoing sky and roaring seas,  
All swell the chorus: God is good.  
Yes, God is good, all nature says,  
By God's own hand with speech endued;  
And man, in louder notes of praise,  
Should sing for joy that God is good.  
For all Thy gifts we bless Thee, Lord,  
But chiefly for our heavenly food;  
Thy pardoning grace, Thy quickening word  
These prompt our song, that God is good.*

Even in our groaning condition we feel life is sweet. What must the life more abundant be, which Jesus said He came to bring? What unseen, and unknown, good things God has in reservation for those who love Him!

**"If ye continue"**

Divine truth is never found except in the Divinely appointed channels: and those channels are the Lord and the apostles and prophets. To continue in the doctrine set forth in their inspired writings, to study and meditate upon them, and faithfully to conform our characters to them, is what is implied in continuing in the Word of the Lord.

Man indeed will bless the day he was born when he does his Maker's Will.

Bitter must be the thought that man was only to enjoy these good things for a few years or so. Such would have been man's lot, had not God in His great love sent His Son to taste death for every man.

*"Thou didst not spare Thine only Son,  
But gav'st Him for a world undone,  
And freely with that Blessed One,  
Thou givest all."*

(I Chron. 29, 11-16).

Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory. What a Victory, over the bitter enemy, death.

What is death?

Close your eyes a while and visualise the last look of Nature in all its beauty. The last look at the sun, moon, and stars. The last strain of music: organ, bands or the sweet song of the birds: the last lovely meal of food, with all its sweetness: the last sweet kiss, and handshake, and the last Good-bye.

O, what an enemy!

We indeed should bestir ourselves to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Our Saviour was so conscious of the bitter enemy that He offered prayers and made strong crying unto Him who was able to save Him from death. "Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved."

*"Lives again our glorious King,  
Where, O death, is now thy sting?  
Once He died our souls to save:  
Where's thy victory, boasting grave."  
Hallelujah!  
"Salvation is free."*

We cannot be yoked in with Christ unless we have His spirit. Two that are yoked together must be of one mind: and that which makes the yoke set lightly upon us is the fixedness of purpose which does not chafe under it or try to get away from it, but which delights to bear it in view of the end to be gained.



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

# Bible Study Monthly

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This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge of the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

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Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

## BETWEEN OURSELVES

The usual London Convention arranged by various London classes is again planned for this year, and will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, over the August Bank Holiday period, commencing on Saturday afternoon and continuing until Monday afternoon. Details can be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Cottage, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks. For accommodation please write early to Bro. H. Chapman, The Small House, Stoke Close, Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey.

### Gone from us

Sis. E. Hay (*Ipswich*)  
 Bro. Goodwin (*Rugby*)  
 Sis. H. E. Key (*Lowestoft*)  
 Sis. E. Melliush (*Aylesbury*)  
 Bro. L. Smethurst (*New Eltham*)  
 Bro. J. G. Melville (*Uiverston*)  
 Sis. R. Bush (*Anerley*)

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

## Visit of Bros. P. L. Read and A. L. Muir from U.S.A.

The following appointments have been made. Further details from Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Please note changes Aug. 12 (*Muir*) and Aug. 7-9 (*Read*) from the details published last month.

<i>Bro. A. L. Muir</i>	9	Anerley	<i>Bro. P. L. Read</i>	21	Warrington	
JULY	10-11	Aldersbrook	AUG.	22	Manchester	
12-13	N. Ireland	12	3-5	London	24-25	Midlands
14-15	Belfast	13		Convention		special
17	Wallasey	14	7	Luton	26	Welling
18-19	Manchester	15	8	Oxford	27	Windsor
21	Warrington	17-18	9	Aylesbury	28	Central London
27-28	Cardiff		10-11	Cardiff	29	Aldersbrook
31	Windsor	19	13	Melton	30	Anerley
AUG.				Mowbray		
3-5	London	20	14	Lincoln	SEPT.	
	Convention	21	15	Nottingham	1	Forest Gate
7	Central London	24-25	16-18	Glasgow		
8	Welling		19-20	Belfast		

## **THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM**

Words of Jesus illumined by the Old Testament

*"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* (Matt. 16, 19).

Strange words, seemingly giving to Peter greater power than has ever at any time been given to any other man! What was it that Jesus saw in this simple fisherman which led Him to repose such confidence in Him? What was the nature of that commission whose terms extend beyond this earth and its span of time into the heavens and into eternity?

There is evidently some connection between these words and those given by the resurrected Jesus to John on the island of Patmos. *"These things saith he that hath the key of David; he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."* (Rev. 3, 7). There is an air of finality about these words which marks them as having reference to some very decisive aspect of the Divine Plan, and that the kingly power of Jesus is involved is very evident. Fully to understand the allusion, however, it is necessary to go back to the Old Testament, and it is in the eloquent words of Isaiah that we find the source of this theme.

In Isaiah's twenty-second chapter the prophet speaks of one Shebna, who is treasurer over the royal house and therefore responsible to the king for the welfare of the nation. He is an unfaithful steward, for he has sought his own advantage, and that of his personal friends, to the detriment of the people and the national welfare. On this account the prophet is commissioned to pronounce Divine judgment upon him. His office is to be taken away and given to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who will be a true father to Jerusalem and Judah, and discharge the duties of the office faithfully. On the shoulder of this man is to be laid the key of the house of David, so that he shall open, and none shut; and he shut, and none open. Here then is the prophecy which gave inspiration for our Lord's words to Peter and those concerning himself.

Shebna and Eliakim are known to history only as Court officials in the time of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18, 18-37). They were probably men of some note during Isaiah's life but their only place in Divine revelation was that of actors in a drama which was to be a foreview of a greater thing. One chapter in Isaiah's writings tells us all we need to know about them. Six verses of that chapter are

sufficient for our immediate purpose *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David I will lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off; for the Lord hath spoken it."* (Isa. 22, 20-25).

The "key of the house of David" is obviously the Divine authority vested in the royal line of David. The Davidic dynasty was the only one recognised by God as enjoying the right to rule on the "throne of the Lord" in Jerusalem over Israel. David was promised that he would "never want a man to rule over Israel"; i.e., the Davidic line would never become extinct and God would never recognise a king of any other line. True to all this, Jesus Christ, Who is to be the King of all the earth during the Millennial Age, was of the line of David. And Israel was the chosen people of God, made so that they might be His missionaries to all nations when the time comes. Hence the man upon whose shoulders was placed the "key of David" occupied a most honourable and responsible position. He was in a very real sense the Executor of the Divine Plans, and in the days of natural Israel such a man, more than any other, could haste or hinder the accomplishment of God's purposes.

Shebna was an enemy of God, and God removed him. He was "tossed like a ball into a large country" (Isa. 22, 18), that is, he was stripped of all his glory and honour, his ill-gotten gains and robes of office, and flung out into the wilderness to perish. He, previously to Eliakim, had held the key of David. He, previously to Eliakim, had been a "nail in a sure place" upon which everything in the house depended. But now the Divine decree had gone forth and that nail which had been fastened

in a sure place had fallen, and the burden that had been upon it had been cut off, "*for the Lord hath spoken it*" (vs. 25). The rule of Shebna had given place to the rule of Eliakim, and all the glory of the house of David was to find its focus and its centre in the person of this, the Lord's anointed.

There is only one time in history to which this language respecting the glory of the house of David can be applied in symbol, and that is at the setting up of Christ's Kingdom, when the Lord Jesus Christ, as the personal representative of the Father, will rule the world in justice and equity (Isa. 11, 4) and all things will depend upon Him, things small and great, "vessels of cups to vessels of wagons" (vs. 24). Jesus Himself knew that He was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy and therefore He could say with truth that He had the key of David. Upon Him is to depend "all the offspring and issue" (vs. 24) for all who enter into life during the Millennial Age will receive it from Him. "He shall see his seed" (Isa. 53, 10). "I am come that they might have life" (John 10, 10). "His name shall be called . . . the Everlasting Father" (Isa. 9, 6). And that glorious "throne to his father's house" spoken of in vs. 23 finds its reality in the Great White Throne of the Millennial Age (Rev. 20, 11), before which all the nations of the world, dead and living, will be arrayed to receive judgment, and if they will, blessing and everlasting life.

The robe and the girdle of vs. 21 are terms associated with the priesthood. There is more than a hint here that the One whom Eliakim prefigured is both a priest and a King, a priest upon his throne (Gen. 14, 18). The 11th chapter of Isaiah describes the kingly work of Christ during the Millennium. "Of the increase of his kingdom and government there shall be no end" and the noble words of Psa. 110 come to the mind, "The Lord said unto my lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The rule of Christ during that Age is one that will bring blessings of health and everlasting life to those who are truly converted to Him, but at the same time will firmly repress evil and all attempts to commit evil. Hence it will be true that earth's new King will "open, and none shall shut" and "shut, and none shall open." Those who willingly come into harmony with the laws of the Kingdom will enter into life, and none will be able to take away from them that life; and those who persist still in attempts to do evil, and will not come to Him that they might have life (John 5, 40) will eventually pass into that death which is the inevitable result of wilful sin; and no one will be able to deliver them from that death.

Now these are the thoughts that Jesus must have had in mind when He spoke to Peter. Just as He

Himself had received the "key of David" and had thus become the representative of the Heavenly Father in the execution of His Plan; just as to Him had been entrusted the oversight and control of all mankind and of all the earth for the purpose of bringing both them and it into full conformity with the Divine intentions, so Jesus was now appointing Peter as His representative to take the lead in initiating the work which was to commence at Pentecost and continue for two thousand years, until the Lord should come again. That the disciples understood it this way is shown by the fact that Peter remained the acknowledged head of the little band through all those early years when the Church was gaining its foothold in the earth. It was Peter who at Pentecost preached the first Gospel sermon. It was Peter who received the first Gentile convert — Cornelius—into the Church. It was Peter with whom Paul, the next great leader given to the Church, conferred preparatory to taking up his own place in the ministry. The whole of the work and fellowship of the Jewish Church of the generation that knew Jesus in the flesh bears the impress of Peter's mind, just as that of the Gentile Church of a little later is characterised by that of Paul. Peter was given the keys of the Kingdom, that Kingdom which his Master had preached, and Peter it was who opened the door through which others, Paul included, were to follow when their time of service had come.

So we can picture this grand disciple laying down the standards of the Kingdom just as he had received them from His Master. His mind was clear now; there would be no further hesitation or denying. As the years went by he became more and more confident, so that he could say at last "we have not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter, 1, 16). The truths that Peter taught were the truths of heaven; the things that he promised were things that must surely come to pass, and therefore it was that whatever he bound on earth was bound in heaven; whatever he loosed on earth was loosed in heaven, for no man could gainsay or set aside what he said or taught. Heaven's confirmation was upon his work, and in the power of that authority he was able to go forth and do mightily in the service of his Lord.

Paul was the theologian, but Peter was the man of faith. In the long run it is faith rather than theology that will gain us the Kingdom, and hence it is that Jesus' words are still true. The stirring exhortations to Christian living and steadfast faith which form so large a part of Peter's epistles still define the way by which we must walk to be overcomers. "By these," says Peter, "*ye may become partakers of the Divine nature . . .*" There is no

other way; and what Peter has bound for us, and loosed for us, in the teachings he has bequeathed to us, are recorded as bound, and loosed, in the

archives of Heaven, and stand for all time as the gate through which we may gain access to the Heavenly City.

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## **"IN THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RAISE US UP"**

### **A view of the Dispensations**

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One of the most striking features of the Divine Plan is the orderly development of its features, each successive step advancing the work of the overthrow of evil one stage farther. There are three main phases of this development, each having its own special time and place, each preparing the way for its successor and waxing old and passing away when its work is done. One might almost trace an analogy between these successive phases and the account of the creative week in Genesis when at the end of each period of time, or "day", devoted to some specific development, God looked upon what had been achieved and pronounced it "good." At the close of the sixth day, when He had created earth's crowning glory, man, and placed him in his home, God looked upon all that He had made, and pronounced it "very good." So we might imagine Him as looking upon the finished work of each Age in history, and approving the progress toward ultimate redemption from sin that has been made, and then, at the end, when Christ the King has delivered up the Kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15, 24-28) viewing with serene satisfaction the triumphant outcome to His great plan of salvation and endorsing it "very good."

We know to-day that there are two "salvations," two ultimate destinies, provided for in the Divine plans for men. The Early Church saw this matter more clearly than did the ecclesiastical systems of later times. The influence of the great theologian Augustine has profoundly affected the beliefs of Christendom and since he set his face resolutely against the earlier beliefs, founded upon Scriptural teaching, of an earthly salvation upon a restored and perfected earth, the doctrine of the Millennium, or "Chiliasm" as it has been called, has almost completely disappeared from ordinary Church teaching. And yet for the first four centuries of Christianity this understanding, that God willed an earthly salvation for some and a heavenly salvation for others, under the terms and conditions set out in the New Testament, was never questioned.

The vital principle behind God's intention was this: the earth had been created, and man placed

upon it, to be an everlasting feature of Divine creation. What forms of spiritual life existed before this earth came into existence we do not know, and Scriptural revelation on this point does not tell us much. What intentions God has regarding other spheres of material life akin to the human, on other worlds, we do not know and the Scriptures are even less clear as to this. They do seem to indicate, however, that the human race has been created to live on and to enjoy this earth in all perpetuity, and that the power and commission given to man to increase and multiply is in order that the planet may be adequately populated. When this end has been achieved it is expected that such powers will lapse and cease, and this is perfectly in harmony with the Scriptures as they are at present understood.

Now out of this human race, and whilst it is still in process of learning for itself the dire results of sin, God is calling to Himself those who are prepared to yield up all they are and have, even to life itself, to become co-workers with Him in the execution of this Plan. The significant thing about this is that all who accept this invitation and devote themselves to the interests of God and His Kingdom do become His representatives and missionaries among men, and will be appointed to positions of authority in that Day when His Kingdom is established over all the earth; but they will not all serve in the same sphere. It would seem that the faithful ones of the ages prior to Christ will be of the earth, human beings, resurrected to a human perfection such as they will have never previously known, and that those of the days since Christ came will inherit the heavenly salvation and become members of the spiritual world, forever associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in His work of reigning over and blessing the nations. Why there should be this distinction made between men and women who, although separated in historical time, are yet one in their devotion and loyalty to God, it is not our province to enquire. Without doubt there exists good reason for the Divine arrangement, and we may well expect, as we come to comprehend more and more clearly the mysteries of God's ways, to discern something of the reason for this differentiation.

The selection and preparation of these two companies of "workers for God" has been and remains the principal work of the Divine Plan and will continue so until the heavenly company, the "Church" of this Age, is complete. The time will then have come for God to turn His attention to the world of men in general and, with His two companies of trained workers at His command, to set about the final phase of the elimination of evil by the conversion of all mankind—"whosoever will."

Of the three phases of this Plan, therefore, two — the first two — are concerned with the selection and preparation of these two companies, and the third has to do with their appointed work of reconciling the "residue of men" (Acts 15, 17) to God and undoing the effect of sin in their lives. The first phase has to do with the preparation of the earthly people and the Old Testament reveals an interesting chain of development in this connection.

Two thousand years before Christ, God called Abraham, a Hebrew living in the Sumerian city of Ur, and, finding him responsive to His leading, eventually told him that in him, and in his seed, all families of the earth were to be blessed. This promise marked the beginning of active measures for the development of the "chosen peoples." Abraham became the progenitor of a line of patriarchs whose loyalty to God was unquestioned, and of a family the descendants of which, six hundred years later, became a nation, the nation of Israel.

There can be no doubt that God saw in Abraham and Sarah his wife qualities which, reproduced in the nation that sprang from them, rendered that nation particularly fitted for the duties it was afterwards called upon to perform. The claim of the Israelites to be the "chosen nation" is a perfectly correct claim; the authority of the Old Testament can be invoked to support it; but it will be only those members of that nation who have entered fully into sympathy with God's design for mankind, and have devoted themselves to the Divine will for them, that will eventually be brought together as an earthly missionary nation for the execution of God's work on earth. The fact remains, however, that by the time of the First Advent a goodly number of faithful men and women had been laid aside in death waiting for the time that God would call them forth to enter upon their destined work.

For two thousand years longer, a second "day," a second phase of the Divine Plan, God has worked in the world calling men and women to come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ that He might fashion and conform them to the likeness He has fore-

ordained, conformation to the image of His Son. This calling is a spiritual calling, and the standards to which the Christian is called to attain are higher than those which were set before the pre-Christian "saints." His calling is to a higher sphere and his training for a greater work. Whereas the earthly people are to administer affairs in the Kingdom of God upon earth and stand as the permanent visible representatives of the spiritual government of Jesus Christ, the heavenly people are to be associated with Him in the government (Rev. 3, 21), and will direct the work of the Kingdom, causing life and blessing to flow to those who are coming willingly into harmony with God through faith in Christ, and bringing to bear all Heaven's powers of persuasion upon those who still exercise their prerogative of free will to remain in sin.

The first phase ended at our Lord's First Advent. The second ends at His Second Advent, which is designed in the Plan for the dual purpose of completing the gathering of the Church and so bringing this "Gospel Age" to an end, and introducing the "Millennial Age" with all that it holds of life and blessing for every man.

The third phase is the Millennium, the Kingdom of God upon earth. That day is to be prefaced by the General Resurrection, in which the earthly people of God will be restored from their graves and established in their own land, the Holy Land, from whence the Law of the Lord will go forth (Isa. 2, 3). The Church will have been completed and gathered to spiritual conditions, ready for its own work. The Devil will have been bound, that he might deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20, 1-3). By the end of that Age it will be true that "everything that hath breath praise the Lord." The inevitable result of sin will have come upon any who may refuse to turn from sin to serve the living God, and with the final and irrevocable death of such, the earthly creation will have been purified and perfected. Sin will not again invade the habitation or the heart of man. Humanity will have entered into eternal life, realising at last that it is in God that they live, and move, and have their being (Acts 17, 28).

*"In the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."* (Hos. 6, 2). The words were spoken of Israel, but they are a fitting commentary upon the three historical stages of the Divine Plan.

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Every day is crowded with minutes, and every minute with seconds, and every second with opportunities to develop fruitage.

## SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

An  
Exhortation

In the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, chapter 2, 23 we read "*Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*" And in 1 Tim. 6, 12 "*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.*" Warfare is an apt metaphor used in Scripture in reference to those who belong to Christ, for the Christian's life is a continual battle. In 2 Cor. 10, 4 we are told that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" or as Dewes translation puts it, "the weapons of our warfare are not such as the flesh uses; but mighty before God for the casting down of strongholds. We cast down reasonings and every high place that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God: and we lead captive every intent of the mind till we bring it where Christ is obeyed." Although we do not fight literally, nevertheless we need all the ardour and strength of a good soldier, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the heavens." (Eph. 6, 12). If we had to face all this opposition in our own strength we would surely fail. We are no match for such foes. But praise be to God Who has provided us with a complete armour for our use and protection. What is more, God guides and leads and watches over all who obey His commands. Yes, obedience is necessary on the part of every soldier.

*The Christian's Armour.* It is a wonderful thought that our armour is provided by God Himself. Surely no greater guarantee for our safety could be given. We can be quite sure the armour is perfect. It is up to every soldier to take up *all* the parts of the armour and put them on. Eph. 6, 13, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." The evil day would have reference to any time of trial. All Christians throughout the age have waged this warfare by means of God's armour. No doubt there is a special sense in which Christians are harassed by the enemy in these latter evil days. Rev. 12, 12 speaks of the devil having great wrath knowing he hath but a short time. The signs in the world indicate we are approaching the end of the age and Satan the arch enemy of the soldiers of Christ will do his utmost to annoy and hinder them, in his final effort to oppose the Church of God.

Let us examine the Christian's armour which Paul brings to our attention in Eph. 6. The apostle evidently had in mind the attire of the Grecian soldier

of those days. For here is allusion to some of the most important parts of their armour. Verse 14 "Stand therefore having our loins girt about with *Truth.*" The girdle worn by the Grecian soldier was a fine ornamented belt. It served to brace the armour tight to the body and was used to support short swords and daggers. Jesus said "Thy word is truth." God has graciously given us His written word. We need to study it and make it our own. The Psalmist said "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Let us feed daily on the food provided in the Word of Truth. For we have need of a *strong* girdle as we shall see as we proceed. Our girdle is finely ornamented too. The beautiful gems of God's Word adorn the Christian's girdle, the most precious of which are God's promises to the Church.

"And having on the Breastplate of Righteousness." This consisted of two parts, one for the back and the other covering the breast and all the vital organs. It came well down thus giving full protection. The Greek word for righteousness means Justification and indicates a standing or condition of being right with God. Rom. 5, 1 "*Being justified (or made right) by faith we have peace with God.*" The two parts of the Breastplate would represent the faith and love of those at peace with God. (1 Thess. 5, 8). Yes, implicit faith and sincere love for God are necessary. (1 John, 5, 1-5). It was round the lower part of the Breastplate that the Girdle was attached. This shows that it is only by means of the truth of God's Word that we can maintain our standing with God as His children.

Verse 15. Special Brazen Boots were worn by the Grecian soldier. We are to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Why the preparation? The Greek word for preparation means *readiness* and *alacrity*. According to the dictionary, alacrity means briskness, eagerness, *cheerful ardour*. Rom. 10, 15 corroborates this description "*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things.*" Yes, it is a joy to preach the gospel either orally or by the printed page and we should be eager to do so. Some brethren have applied Rom. 10, 15 to the last members on earth of the Church. But there is no justification for doing so. The words are equally applicable to all the messengers of truth right from the time Jesus said "Go thou and preach the Kingdom of God." In

Acts 8, 4 we read "They (the disciples) went everywhere preaching the word." Jesus *went* about doing good, healing and preaching. All this implies the use of our feet. "Let my feet run in His ways." Thus we will be "armoured" Christians, not merely "arm-chair" Christians. May we be ready as was the prophet Isaiah to exclaim "Here am I, send me." And let us go in the spirit of eagerness and cheerful ardour.

Verse 16 "Above all taking the *Shield of Faith*." We have already seen that faith must operate in the life of the true soldier. There were different kinds and sizes of shields used in those days. According to the Greek word, *Thureos*, here used, Paul was alluding to the type used by heavy armoured troops. It was a large oblong shield and curved so as to cover the whole of the forepart of the body. It was made of hide, covered on the outside with metal, the obvious reason being to ward off the fiery darts of the enemy. A dart signifies any kind of missile weapon. The fiery dart alluded to by the Apostle was an arrow headed with lead and in which combustible stuff was placed, that caught fire in the passage of the arrow through the air. Now some of the smaller shields made of hide had no outer covering of metal and if one of the fiery darts were to stick in such a shield it would be set on fire and the soldier would have to throw it away and thus become defenceless. Paul might well call our warfare a "Fight of Faith." It is the Shield of Faith that gets most of the blows and fiery darts of the enemy. Peter said "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." And again "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." (1 Pet. 1, 7; 4, 12). Let us see to it that our shield is the right kind, large enough and strong enough to quench all the fiery darts of our enemies. We need to pray as did the disciples "Lord, increase our faith." Without faith it is impossible to please God. John in his first epistle said "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

"Take the *Helmet of Salvation*. (Verse 17). In I Thess. 5, 8 Paul speaks of the helmet as the "Hope of Salvation," and in Rom. 8, 24 he says "For we are saved by Hope." There could be no better protection for the head or mind of the New Creature in Christ than the wonderful hope of the Church, of being like her Lord and being forever with Him and having part in the uplifting and blessing of mankind. Truly John said "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure." (1 John 3, 3). How does this Hope

purify? By bringing *every thought* into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10, 5).

The armour thus far is defensive. Now Paul tells us to "take the *Sword* of the Spirit which is the Word of God." (Verse 17). This is our offensive weapon, for with it we resist the devil and all opposition to righteousness. The Grecian kept his sword in a sheath attached to the girdle. We have seen that truth is the Christian's girdle, and were reminded of the Scripture "Thy word is truth." It is from this girdle we take our sword when needed. We must know and understand the truth before we can use the sword, so that we may wield it aright. The truth should *never* be argued about but explained. Nor should the sword be handled deceitfully. (2 Cor. 4, 2). Let us learn all we can, prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. We shall then be instructed as to when and how to use the Sword. In Col. 4, 6 we read "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may *know how* to answer every man." In Jude 3 we are exhorted to "earnestly contend for the faith." The word *contend* is from the same root word that the word *fervent* comes from. An example of the latter occurs in Rom. 12, 11, "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." So the thought in Jude 3 is that we must ardently but kindly present the truth. In Heb. 4, 12 we are told of the effects of the use of this sword. Jesus used this sword in the wilderness when Satan tempted Him. He will use it again when He comes forth to judge the world. (Rev. 19, 11-15).

*Praying always*. Paul very appropriately follows on with an exhortation to *prayer*. Verse 18. It is interesting to know that it was the custom of the Grecian armies, before they engaged in battle, to offer prayers to the gods for their success. It is truly necessary for the Christian warrior to pray to God for strength to overcome all his foes. Without Him we can do nothing. A further exhortation follows in Verse 18, "And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The Greek word for *perseverance* implies stretching out the neck and looking about in order to discern an enemy in the distance. So we must be ever on guard. "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" admonished Paul. (2 Tim. 2, 4). Let us beware of any stratagem on the part of the Adversary along this line.

There is a strengthening thought in the latter part of verse 18 "and supplication for all saints." Just as there is a comradeship in the army, so with us. We are not alone in the fight. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

We are exhorted to pray for one another. May we not neglect this privilege, for "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5, 16). When Paul had been telling the Thessalonians about the coming of the Lord for His Church, he said "comfort (or exhort) *one another* with these words. Again in 1 Thess. 5, 11 Paul said "Wherefore comfort yourselves together and edify *one another* even as also ye do."

Owing to the frailty of the flesh there are times when our faith weakens; we sometimes feel the battle is too long and hard for us. The reason we thus falter may be that we have slackened our girdle or put down our shield for a while. The wily Adversary perhaps has suggested that we relax, and take things steady for a time. At such times let us recall the exhortation of Verse 17 "And having

done all to stand." Paul here exhorts the Christian soldier who has thus far waged a good warfare to still keep the whole armour on and thus be prepared at all times for an attack of the enemy. A good soldier is never taken by surprise. The apostle himself set us a good example. He said on one occasion "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air" and nearing the end of his life he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4, 7). Let us look up to our captain, the Lord, and obey His commands.

*Ne'er think the victory won,  
Nor once at ease sit down.  
Thine arduous task will not be done  
Till thou hast gained thy crown.*

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## STORIES OF SALVATION

### 3. A Rest by a Well

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The message of salvation which Jesus brought from God was for all people. The barriers which men erect between peoples of different class and colour make no difference to the ultimate course of the Gospel. Therefore Jesus was friendly towards those who would have been avoided by an orthodox Jew who kept his religious ritual very carefully.

Jesus and His disciples were travelling northward from Judea to Galilee, and one of the roads by which they could journey passed through Samaria, close to the ancient city of Shechem. While the disciples had gone off to purchase food, Jesus sat resting by a roadside well. It was an ancient watering place, having been used by the patriarch Jacob many hundreds of years before. As He sat there a woman of the city came to draw water, and having nothing with which to draw water He asked her for a drink. The woman was obviously greatly surprised by the request. It was unusual for a Jew to speak to a respectable Jewess without proper introduction. The Jews were not friendly toward their Samaritan neighbours and sometimes open hostility occurred. Yet Jesus spoke to this foreign stranger who He knew to be an outcast among her own people. He did so without fear of contamination and confident that among such He could find genuine followers.

The woman's curious nature proved to be a useful means of conveying a simple but valuable message and before long the woman was tasting "living water". As they pursued their conversation she tried to divert attention from her own sinful con-

dition and to focus it upon general ideas about religious ritual. That was the kind of worship which was now common among Jews and Samaritans, in that they were far more concerned with unimportant details of ceremony as to when and where and how they should pray and praise God than in the heartfelt communion between God and His people. Their sermons and services were as dry as dust, with little or nothing in them to promote the spiritual health of the participants. Hence their religion was dead and their faith bound up in places and things rather than in the living Creator. Jesus directed the woman's attention back to the realities of true worship and the individual relationship with God. He showed her that outward form and appearance are negligible compared to inner holiness and aspirations. In those few recorded sentences of our Lord on this subject in John 4, we have the radical cause of Israel's failure as a nation towards the Almighty God of Abraham, who meant little more to them than the lifeless idols and mythical gods of the surrounding nations. In stating the basis of real worship, our Master also revealed the heart of God in the words "for the Father seeketh such."

Jesus needed no vast auditorium nor flocking crowd in order to preach a sermon. He was as happy speaking to one as to a hundred. How important are the words He spoke to one here and one there. They were words which could pierce the cloaks of self-righteousness or the thick coverings of utter sinfulness. The power of his message reached down into the hearts of those to whom He

spoke, and then out into a wider world. The woman was so affected by the Lord's remarks to her, that on returning to the city she succeeded in persuading some of her countrymen to listen to the "prophet of Galilee." What was there about the woman that compelled others to go to see for themselves this man who she said had "told me all that I ever did." The immediate result of that quiet meeting by the well was that "many believed" and came to understand that "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World." It would be impossible to assess the complete result of Jesus' talk to the woman but it would have seemed to have laid the foundations of the great missionary enterprise led by Philip the evangelist and recorded in Acts 8. The Lord's word of command was that the witness should be given in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria . . . . The cities of Samaria and Shechem were not so very far from each other that the good tidings could not easily have spread among the neighbouring citizens.

This woman of Samaria, like many another, had an unquenched thirst of heart which only Jesus could satisfy. In the creation of man, God had given him a yearning to seek His Creator for life and fellowship. Although much of that original stimulus has been lost through sin, it nevertheless remains in the souls of men and women, and during their lives exerts itself. Because of ignorance, the longings of the soul are smothered by worldly pleasure and selfishness. Natural passions are given free rein and the human physique and intellect become slaves to sin in the worst form. The woman who met Jesus at Jacob's well was much such a person as that. The more respectable forms of satisfying the cravings of human nature, to excess and without restraint, are no less sinful and dominated by the Adversary of God and men.

All of these passions may be summed up in the one word "self." Where God has been forgotten, ignored and often purposely rebuffed, the dominating factor of life becomes the satisfying of one's own selfish ambition. It may be in greed for material wealth and power and then many others suffer as a result. Sometimes gluttony or drunkardness become the obsession wherein one's own kinsfolk are distressed, and sometimes the weakness is as with this poor creature who lived on the fringe of Samaritan society. All the children of Adam suffer from this malady to a greater or lesser extent and many who name the name of Christ have not been freed from its bondage through not yielding their lives completely to Him.

Whatever the manifestation of the selfishness, there is only one remedy for the disease and that too was discovered by the woman of Samaria as she came to the well that day. It is to meet the "Great Physician" face to face, and to accept Him

as the only Saviour from all sin. Undoubtedly the woman bore the marks of her shame in her face. Fear and anxiety, mingled with a soured expression, denote those who have yet to find the true source of happiness and peace. And like so many more who have come to the Saviour, she went away transformed. She must have been changed or those in the city of Shechem who went to Jesus as a result of hearing her message would have given no heed to the harlot. Instead they would have thought her mad, and in fact it is remarkable that they did not. John records for us that she "left her water-pot and went her way . . ." Why was she in such a hurry? After years of struggle and wretchedness she had found new life and peace and was determined to share her joy. This she did to such effect that many went to Jesus personally and claimed Him as their Saviour.

The disciples seem to have been rather left out of all this. Their understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven had not yet reached beyond the borders of their own land. Their Master seemed to be doing some strange things and appeared to speak in riddles. They did not realise that the meat and drink of which He spoke was food for a spiritual life. As yet their minds were centred on maintaining their human life. They were still more interested in the signs and seasons of the natural world than Jesus' remarks about the fields being already white unto harvest.

Where does our chief interest lie? Have we met with Jesus and tasted the water "which was not in the well"? If so, did we leave our "water-pots" and hurry off to tell our neighbours and friends in order that they too might share with us the gift of life? Have we not found that the water which the Lord has given has not only quenched our thirst but has been a well of water springing up into eternal life? It is a solemn thought that in desert lands where water is at a premium, it is regarded as criminal to withhold information as to the whereabouts of an oasis.

Thus in this day and generation we have a foretaste of what the prophets foresaw would occur in the Kingdom of God . . . "Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters . . ." (Isa. 55, 1) and again in John's vision of the New Jerusalem "and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Wonderful days they will be when all men everywhere are able to drink deeply of the life-giving waters in Christ. In order that we may share with Christ as fountains springing up into eternal life, we must receive now from the great Divine reservoir and already have become channels for quenching the thirst of those parched and dry in their sins.

The Lord still calls to men as He did on that last day of the Great Feast when He cried to the throngs in Jerusalem "If any man thirst, let him

come unto me, and drink." (John 7, 37) And to such as truly believe on Him, out of them shall "flow rivers of living water."

## DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a  
great man's faith

### 12. Darius the Mede

"And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being three score and two years old." (Ch. 5, 31).

With the capture of Babylon by the Medes and Persians an entirely new life opened before Daniel. At eighty-four years of age he could reasonably have expected to spend his few remaining years in leisurely retirement; the fact that for twenty years past he had been excluded from any official part in the administration of government affairs had without doubt led him to re-organise his life so that he could give his entire time to the study and consideration of the future purposes of God. That much is clear, from the accounts we have of his visions and dreams, and the celestial visitants who came with the revelations and interpretations which have been of such interest and importance to students in every generation since. It is not at all an unusual thing for a man who has led a full and busy life in some business or occupation to hail his retirement as an opportunity for the closer investigation of Biblical truths to which he has not been able to give the attention he would have liked while the responsibility of earning a living or discharging a public office lay upon him. Daniel at the death of his king and benefactor, Nebuchadnezzar, must have felt something like that. For forty-two years he had endured the obligations of high administrative office in Babylon because he knew it to be the will of God that he should thus serve; when upon the accession of successive kings who had no use for him he was deprived of office and allowed to retire into private life, he must have hailed the change as of Divine direction and gladly betaken himself to the more continuous and diligent study of the Divine purposes. And during the twenty years or so thus spent the fruits of his devotion were manifest in the dreams and visions and their interpretations with which we are so familiar.

Now the scene was to change again. The last official act of Belshazzar the last king of Babylon was to appoint Daniel third ruler in the kingdom and therefore the highest State official next to himself. At one stroke Daniel found himself restored to the position he had occupied under King Nebuchadnezzar. Almost immediately fresh responsibility was thrust upon him. The royal decree

promoting Daniel to his new position had hardly been proclaimed when Belshazzar himself was dead, slain by the Median invaders. When Cyrus, seventeen days after the capture of the city, came looking for someone who could formally hand over the civil administration of the capital and the empire, it could very likely have been to Daniel he came. Perhaps in that very hall where only a few days previously the supernatural writing had appeared on the wall, serried ranks of Median and Persian soldiers stood immovable whilst Cyrus, the invincible military conqueror, and Daniel, the gentle and yet firm man of God, transacted the formalities which even in those days, no less than in ours, marked the transfer of sovereignty from the vanquished to the victor.

What a tremendous stimulus to faith it must have been to Daniel, thus to witness with his own eyes the fulfilment of prophecy. Sixty-odd years previously he had stood in that same hall, a lad of nineteen or so, and declared to King Nebuchadnezzar "Thou art this head of gold; and after thee shall arise a kingdom inferior to thee, . . . the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Now he beheld the fulfilment of that prediction. The second of the four world empires had stepped upon the stage to play its part in the drama, and the Kingdom of Heaven was that much nearer.

Happy indeed we if we can see, in the vicissitudes of earthly powers, the fulfilment of prophecy, evidences of the onward progress of the Divine plan and the approaching of the Kingdom. We are not usually called, as was Daniel, to be personally closely linked with the political affairs of the kingdoms of this world. Our observation of their course can be from a much more detached standpoint and for that we can give thanks to God. It is probable that Daniel would have preferred not to have been so closely connected with State affairs in the idolatrous governments of Babylon and Persia — but he was called to that position by God and he was too loyal a servant of God to avoid the consequences of that call. Perhaps some of the more orthodox and bigoted Jews captive in Babylon criticised his acceptance of high office under the State as disloyalty to the principles of Judaism and

the Law Covenant. Perhaps we ourselves, in our rigid adherence to what we hold as the principles of Christian living, may criticise another who undertakes responsibilities or obligations which we would not be prepared to accept. And perhaps, in so doing, we forget the Apostolic admonition "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." One of the hardest lessons we have to learn is that our Master has many varied tasks to be carried out on earth by his devoted followers and He must of necessity use various individuals in different ways. We must each serve and labour in accordance with the call that is given to us without expecting all our fellow-servants necessarily to serve after the same manner.

So Daniel found a new king to serve. "*Darius the Median took the kingdom.*" Who was this Darius? It is so usual to think of Cyrus assuming control upon the fall of Babylon and immediately sending the Jews home to build their Temple that the fact of Darius coming between Belshazzar and Cyrus is often overlooked. Whoever he was, he confirmed Daniel's re-appointment as Chief Minister of the empire, and that too requires some explanation. How comes it that a man in high office in the defeated Administration is preferred above all the Median and Persian notabilities who would in the ordinary way be considered proper choices for the control of the vanquished people?

What has been called "the enigma of Darius the Mede" has puzzled many a student of Bible history in times past. This king is one of the few whose name has not yet been found in any contemporary inscription. A similar situation existed with regard to Belshazzar until toward the end of the nineteenth century, and it had been freely declared by some scholars that Daniel had invented the name of a king who never existed. Nowadays the acts and history of Belshazzar are almost as well known as those of Queen Victoria. Modern research and deduction has likewise succeeded in giving us a fair picture of Darius the Mede, at any rate sufficient to demonstrate the accuracy of the Book of Daniel.

To begin with, Cyrus was not the legal or acknowledged king of the Medo-Persian empire at the death of Belshazzar. The ruling dynasty was Median, and Cyrus was not a Mede. The Median empire had its rise a century before the fall of Nineveh, and it was the joint invasion of Assyria by Cyaxares, king of Media, allied with Nabopolassar of Babylon, father of Nebuchadnezzar, which brought about the destruction of Nineveh in 606 B.C. and the end of the Assyrian empire. This friendship between the two kings was cemented by the giving in marriage of Amytis the daughter of Cyaxares to Nebuchadnezzar the son

of the Babylonian king. Upon the death of Cyaxares, his son Astyages became king of Media. Cyrus, who was a lineal descendant of the kings of Elam, now subject to Medan, was a leading general of the Persian forces in the armies of Media, for Persia also was at that time subject to Media. Cyrus had married the daughter of Astyages, and with this slight claim to royalty he rebelled against his king and in a short time became the most powerful figure in the empire. Ten years before the fall of Babylon he virtually deposed Astyages and became the real ruler, thus bringing the Persian element much more into prominence. The Medes were still predominant, however, and Cyrus was not yet the acknowledged king. In any case he was still busily occupied subduing other nations and building up the empire.

Darius the Mede was the son of Astyages and the last legal claimant to the throne of Media. It is fairly evident that upon the fall of Babylon the Median influence in the combined empire was still so strong that Cyrus, ambitious as he was, preferred to wait until he could legally claim the title and so the Median king occupied the throne. Hence when Babylon fell at the hands of Cyrus, it was Darius the Mede who "took" the kingdom. That word is significant. It has the meaning of receiving a thing at the hands of another. A similar expression occurs in Chap. 9, 1, where Darius is said to have been "made" king over the realm of the Chaldeans. Darius did not acquire the kingdom for himself; it was won for him by Cyrus.

Two years later Darius died without sons, and now Cyrus, by virtue of his marriage to Mandane the sister of Darius, had the best legal right to kingship. From now on the Persian element came to the forefront, but it was not until the time of Darius Hystaspes, the first truly Persian king, seventeen years later, that Persia took precedence over Media. The Old Testament yields an interesting confirmation of this fact. The Book of Daniel, completed by Daniel in the days of Darius the Mede and Cyrus, refers always to the "Medes and Persians", Medes coming first. The Book of Esther, describing events in the days of Xerxes, son of Darius Hystaspes, has it "the kings of Persia and Media," Persia now coming first.

Daniel, in Chap. 9, 1, refers to Darius as the "son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes." Ahasuerus in the native languages concerned is the same as the Greek Cyaxares, and in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit is called by that name. The term "son" here means "grandson" as in the case, in Chap. 5, of Belshazzar, who was actually the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Josephus and all other ancient historians are definite in stating that a Median king succeeded Belshazzar and was in turn replaced by

Cyrus the Persian. It can fairly be stated therefore that the "enigma of Darius the Mede" is, thanks to present century Biblical research, an enigma no longer. Once again, Daniel is proved to know better than all his modern critics.

*"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was one; that the princes might give accounts unto them, and that the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king was minded to set him over the entire realm."* (Chap. 6, 1-3).

Three points in which the A.V. translation is inadequate have to be noticed. Daniel was not "first" of the three presidents, but one of them. He was not "preferred" above the others but distinguished himself above them; and Darius had in mind his further promotion to be the Chief Minister of the entire Medo-Persian empire. The question naturally arises; why such honours to a representative of the defeated nation?

The answer, in the first place, lies in the fact that Daniel, and his sterling worth, were not entirely unknown to the Median king. The close friendship between the Median and Babylonian kings in the days of Nebuchadnezzar must have involved Daniel in some close contact with the Medes. It was the ambition of Cyrus and his Persians which attacked Babylon, not animosity on the part of the Median kings. Very probably Darius the Mede had a closer feeling for his royal Babylonian relatives than he had for Cyrus, whom he must have regarded as a usurper, even though Cyrus was married to his sister. Queen Nitocris, mother of Belshazzar, was herself first cousin to Darius, and in earlier and happier days there must have been plenty of going and coming between the royal houses of Babylon and Media. Darius might very well have been personally acquainted with Daniel in those days. What more natural thing, then, when he assumed sovereignty over the conquered people, to appease them and ensure peaceable submission by appointing as their immediate ruler the man who had been their Chief Minister for forty years in times past, whom he knew personally and in whom he could place confidence.

It would seem that Darius made the subjection of Babylon the occasion for a complete re-organisation of the empire. He created a hundred and twenty provinces (which by the time of Esther, fifty years later, had become one hundred and twenty seven — see Esther 1, 1) and appointed a local governor over each. Above these came the three princes, of whom Daniel was one, responsible

directly to the King. It would seem logical to conclude that these three princes were set over Media, Persia and Babylon respectively, Daniel being the appointed Minister for Babylon. The outstanding qualities of Daniel again marked him out for preferment and the king formed the design of promoting him to have authority over all three divisions of the empire, and at that the other officials took alarm and began to consult together to effect the disgrace of the hated Jew.

The indomitable spirit of this remarkable man nowhere shines out more brightly than at this point. At an age when most men would be considered past performing useful work for the community, he still made such an impression upon his fellows that he could be seriously considered for an administrative position that would tax the abilities of men half his age. Like Moses, Daniel's "eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Of him it could truly be said that he was immortal until his work was finished, and although in the story we are now within three years of the time when he leaves the stage, we see him at the height of worldly power and influence, still the confidant of kings, still the object of unremitting hatred by powerful enemies, still, we may be sure, working quietly but energetically for the welfare of his own people, Israel, as yet held captive in Babylon. Here is an outstanding example of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God, entering into a man, inspiring him, sustaining him, rebutting all the assaults of his enemies, prospering the way before him that through him some vital part of the purposes of God might be carried out.

We do well to take the lesson to heart. There is no limit to what God can do with a man who is wholly and unreservedly consecrated to him. Such a man must be prepared to suffer with equal fortitude success and failure, prosperity and adversity, the favours of men and their recriminations, serene always in the sure knowledge that all he is and all he does is for the furtherance of the Divine plans for all creation and that in the power of the Holy Spirit within him he must go forward and he cannot fail. That was Daniel's secret.

*(To be continued).*

To demand liberty for the other man, even when he differs from us, is not to admit that truth and error are essentially one, or to deny that it is of great consequence what the other man believes and teaches. It may be our duty to oppose with all our might what he teaches, to denounce it as deadly error. But this may be done without identifying the man with what he teaches, and without the display of the spirit of intolerance and persecution. We need not try to make the man odious because his opinion is odious to us.

## "EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM"

An examination of Rev. 1.7

*"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."* (Rev. 1, 7).

In what way will they "see" Him; by natural sight or spiritual? In past ages such a question would not arise; the belief then prevalent that our Lord was resurrected in His fleshly human body made it the logical conclusion that He would return in that same body and hence would be seen of men by natural sight. We know to-day that our Lord was resurrected from the dead in the glory of spiritual nature, a glory that cannot be sensed by natural eyes, and that the human body buried in Joseph's tomb became no part of His present being. It follows therefore that, unless at His return He "materialises" in human form as did the angels in Old Testament days, and as He did Himself upon certain occasions between the time of His resurrection and that of His ascension, He must be invisible to human sight, and the fact of His return must be discerned by other evidences, and He be "seen" therefore by what we call "spiritual sight."

It is not sufficient, though, thus to dismiss further consideration of this Scripture, for the word here is that "every eye shall see him." Some have pointed out that the word is not "*horao*" which is said to have the meaning of "discern", but "*opsetai*", which is said to mean the seeing with the natural sight, and hence that the text should be taken literally despite the considerations which have just been expressed. Now in fact both words, "*horao*" and "*opsetai*", and their variations in the New Testament, have both uses, to "see" with the physical eyes and to "see" mentally. Since this is a rather important point a few instances of the word which is rendered "see" in the text under consideration are given here in order to establish the matter.

Jno. 3, 36 "He that believeth not the Son shall not *see* (*opsetai*) life."

Luke 3, 6 "All flesh shall *see* (*opsetai*) the salvation of God."

Matt. 27, 24 "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. *See* (*opsethe*) you to it."

Matt. 27, 4 "What is that to us. *See* (*opsei*) thou to that."

In the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint):

Psa. 49, 9 "That he should still live for ever and not *see* corruption."

Zech. 9, 5 "Askelon shall *see* and be afraid."

And in the Apocrypha:

Baruch 4, 24-25 "The neighbours of Sion . . . shall *see* your salvation . . . Thine enemy hath persecuted thee but shortly thou shalt *see* his destruction."

From these instances — there are others — it should be clear that the word is not used necessarily to mean "seeing" with the physical sight; it does on occasion indicate "seeing" with the mental sight, and it does not follow, therefore, that the use of "*opsetai*" here teaches that Jesus at His return will be visible to mankind.

The next thing to consider is the thought in John's mind when he wrote the words. What did *he* intend to convey? What is the understanding that the Holy Spirit sought to impart to us through John's ready pen.

The verse stands by itself; it has no direct connection either with the preceding or the succeeding verses. It is an ecstatic outburst, as it were, on John's part using the language of the Old Testament. He had written his greeting, a greeting of grace and peace from the Father, the Son, and the angelic host as represented by the archangels, (the "seven spirits before the throne"). He had gone on to extol the One Who has both saved us and made us kings and priests, and having concluded this greeting with a deep-felt "Amen" (vs. 6), it is as if a new thought strikes him and he exclaims "Behold, he cometh . . .", seeing the ultimate end of all that he had witnessed in vision on Patmos. We should take the verse as being, not a bald, sober statement of physical fact, but a rhapsody of praise for a forthcoming event, expressed in familiar Scriptural terms. The words of this verse are repeated from the sayings of Jesus and the utterances of the prophets and it is to those origins that we should turn if we would rightly understand the text.

The memory immediately in John's mind must have been the reply of Jesus to the High Priest, recorded in Matt. 26, 64. John was present at that scene (Jno. 18, 15) and heard the words. "Hereafter ye shall *see* (*opsontai*) the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." That declaration was in turn a direct reference to Dan. 7, 13. "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven . . . and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him." Now that verse in Daniel, in common with

the whole of the chapter, is quite clearly symbolic; we do not expect that the Most High will seat Himself upon an earthly throne and superintend the burning of a literal ten-horned beast! Neither do we expect that the Lord Jesus will literally be brought before a throne of fire in order to receive His Kingdom. And Jesus knew that this was symbolic when he alluded to this well-known belief before Caiaphas. John knew too when he quoted the words in Rev. 1, 7, and there was no doubt in his mind as to the reality of that Coming even although he knew himself to be describing it in terms that were symbolic.

But John's thoughts had ranged further back than the time of Daniel. He had the golden visions of Isaiah in mind, visions in which the same word "*opsetai*" is used for the same event. He was thinking of Isa. 40, 5 "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall *see* (opsetai) it together," and of Isa. 52, 8 "For they shall *see* (opsontai) eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." (This latter Scripture refers to the "Watchers" coming as it were "face to face" with the returning Lord, and not, as is sometimes suggested, to the harmony of believers on doctrinal matters at the "Time of the End." "*They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion*" is the way Margolis translation has it, and this is the thought both of the Hebrew and the Greek of the Septuagint).

Quite instinctively John associated with these Scriptures another theme, that upon which the prophet Zechariah dwelt when he said (Zech. 10,10) "*they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.*" John had already associated that Scripture with a limited fulfilment at the time of the Crucifixion (Jno. 19, 37); now he associates it with a greater fulfilment. Not only would the "Watchers" as in Isa. 52, 8, see the Lord returning to Zion; not only would "all flesh", all the world, as in Isa. 40, 5, see the glory of the Lord revealed; not only would the wicked who had risen up for judgment, as in Daniel 7, see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, but those who in John's sight were the furthest of all removed from God—"they also which pierced him" would experience this same realisation of His Return for judgment and conversion. None can escape the Coming of the Son of Man! All are to be brought before Him that He might separate them as a shepherd divides between his sheep and his goats. (Matt. 25, 32). Just as in Zechariah there is a world-wide mourning for an only son so in John's ecstasy he foresaw that "all kindreds of the earth shall wail over (not "because of him." The word is *epi* and the

thought that of mourners wailing over a dead beloved one). The correspondence between Zech. 10, 10 and Rev. 1, 7 on this point is exact.

It should be clear then that since the "seeing" in the Scriptures which gave John his inspiration for this verse in Revelation is not physical, but metaphorical, John is hardly likely to have intended his words here to be interpreted to mean physical sight. "*Behold*" he says, in the language of his beloved Scriptures, "*he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.*" He knew that the "seeing" in those texts was with the mental sight and it is reasonable to conclude that in alluding to those texts he applied the same meaning to them.

A further confirmation of this viewpoint is the fact that if "they that pierced him" are literally to witness His coming in the clouds of heaven they must be resurrected *before* the Second Advent takes place. Such a thought is out of harmony with all that we know of the Plan. The Lord comes, first, to raise His own faithful ones. After that, and after He has presented the risen Church before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy, He will be revealed, with His Church, in glory to the world. And only after that will the General Resurrection commence and "they that pierced him" be awakened from the sleep of death to stand before the great White Throne. They will not, they can not, physically witness His return to earth; but they will "see" Him then in exactly the same way that we, now, see, "eye to eye," the Lord returning to Zion.

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Our first concern, then should be for the heart—that its affections and disposition may be fully under the control of divine grace; that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there; that justice, mercy, benevolence, brotherly kindness, love, faith, meekness, temperance, supreme reverence for God and Christ, and a fervent love for all the beauties of holiness, may be firmly fixed as the governing principles of life. If these principles be fixed, established, in the heart, then out of the good treasure of the heart, the mouth will speak forth words of truth, soberness, wisdom and grace.

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"Prayer is the Christian's breath of life— . . . The impression of having had an interview with the King of kings amid the ministries of Cherubim and Seraphim should not be rudely tossed off, but gently and thoughtfully cherished. And it shall be as a nosegay of fresh flowers, which a man gathers before he leaves some fair and quiet garden, a refreshment amidst the dust and turmoil of earthly pursuits."

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## BRETHREN OF "THE WAY"

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A glimpse of  
early days

The earliest believers in Jesus Christ—before the time that the word "Christian" had been coined—adopted a charming term to describe their fellowship. They called themselves "brethren of 'the way'" and this expression occurs a number of times in the Book of Acts. It was a new way of life into which they had entered, a way that led to the Kingdom, a straight narrow way that nevertheless was broader in its liberty and longer in extent than the bondage of Judaism which they had left. And because they found themselves to be fellow-pilgrims together, travelling as one company through the darkness of this world to the light of that which is to come, and because their Master Himself had told them "I am the way," they took to themselves in utter simplicity and sincerity a word that expressed to the full the spontaneity and happiness of their communion. They were "brethren of 'The Way'."

The first mention of the name as such is in Acts 9, 2, where we are told about Saul, the persecutor of the infant Church, receiving authority that if he "found any of the way," he might "bring them bound to Jerusalem." This was within a few years of Jesus' death, when Saul was still a young man, and the Jerusalem Church under the guidance and teaching of the Apostles was growing rapidly in numbers. This name must have originated right at the beginning.

One wonders who first suggested it. What discussions there must have been in those first days over the question of a distinctive name for the new fellowship! The orthodox Jewish Church had its sects — Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zadokites, and others lesser known. The political parties, Herodians, and Zealots, had a quasi-religious connection and might almost be counted as sects, too. The disciples had been known popularly as Nazarenes, but quite evidently they would not accept that name willingly themselves. And in the probably oft-times excited babble of discussion it might well have been the reflective, loving mind of John which inspired a suggestion winning immediate acceptance. "The Master said 'I am the Way.' Let us call ourselves 'brethren of the Way'."

The name evidently became known very quickly. When Paul arrived at Ephesus he found that "*divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of the way*" (Acts 19, 9), and a little later Demetrius the silversmith called his fellow craftsmen together and "*there arose no small stir about the Way*" (Acts 19, 23). (Incidentally, it should

be noted that in every case where the expression occurs, except in Acts 22, 4, it should be read "*the way*," not "*that way*." In the Greek the definite article, not the demonstrative, is employed). The persecution of "the Way" which arose at Ephesus was only one of many, and when Paul returned to Jerusalem he found the same bitter prejudice against the Christian community. When the riot which led to his arrest was at its height, he stood on the castle steps and made his defence to the people. "*I persecuted this Way unto the death*," he cried (Acts 22, 4), speaking of his actions at the time before his conversion. And later on still, we find that Felix, the Roman governor, had "*more perfect knowledge of 'the Way'*" than had his predecessor Porcius Festus (Acts 24, 22).

The term died out eventually, being replaced by the more immediately descriptive word "Christian," which, we are told, originated in Antioch (Acts 11, 26). Perhaps there was a loss in the passing of the phrase. It was such a simple, refreshingly naive answer to give enquirers. "Who are you?" "We are brethren of 'the Way'." And it was in the simplicity of that bond that the early Church formed its first communal fellowship, having all things in common and parting to each as they had need; and so prospered in spiritual things.

Perhaps in this our day we have unconsciously followed the same leading which ended in the use of that name. We often call ourselves "brethren of the Truth." Said Jesus "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14, 6). There is surely a fitness here. Brethren of the Way at the beginning of the Age; brethren of the Truth at the end of the Age; both together, with all who have lived during the intervening centuries, "brethren of the Life," in the Age which is to come, when the "faithful in Christ Jesus" will be ushered into the presence of the Father with exceeding joy.

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It is by looking down into the puddles of human sordidness and sin that the life of the Christian becomes one of gloom and sadness. To look up to the stars and to see that the Way of the Cross (with its submissiveness to the Will of God) is all of a piece with Heaven, as well as with Earth, will enlarge one's outlook, and make one to realize that God's Sovereignty is not just of yesterday or even to-day, but is forever and ever; is not just of one's own little half-inch circle, but spans the broad horizons of all the mighty deep above us.



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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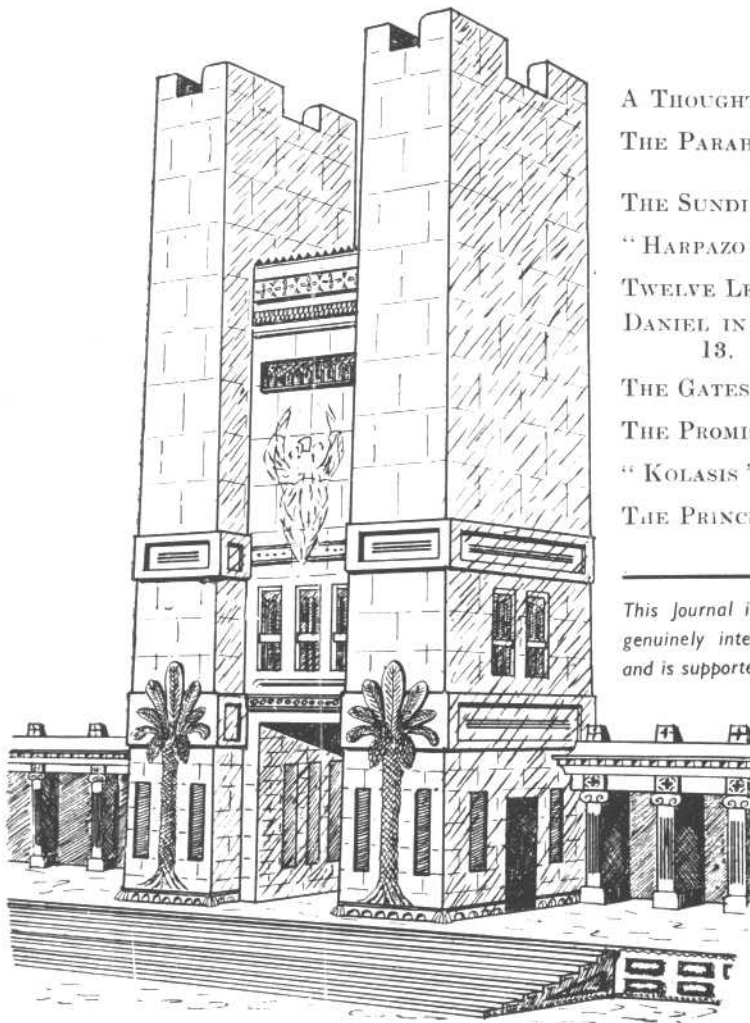
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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### A Thought for the Month

*"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* (Matt. 5, 16).

A recently discovered and hitherto unpublished sermon of an old-time famous preacher, Charles Simeon, has this passage: "If your life be not as becometh the Gospel of Christ, the world will despise religion as a worthless unproductive thing, and those who profess godliness will be apt to catch the injection and to sink into lukewarmness." Is this one reason for the loss of faith and zeal which many bemoan in these trying days? Is it that the world's unbelief and scorn as regards our message, reflected back to us, of itself induces a growing loss of zeal and even of conviction, resulting in a lack of enterprise and a resultant settling down in the social comfort of our fellowship and a waiting for the Lord to set up His Kingdom and take His Church to heavenly glory without being concerned any longer with the manifesting of the outward characteristics of the salt of the earth, lights in the world, and a city set on a hill?

It would seem so in some cases at least. Advancing age can justify some cessation of active service; the more strenuous and trying conditions of this distressful period involves a certain restriction of opportunity; the fact of decreasing numbers within the fellowship renders effective co-operation increasingly difficult. But none of these things would be seriously argued by any of us if our Master plainly appeared before us to exhort us, as He did His own disciples, that we go on in life, in whatever circumstances and under whatever disadvantages we may be placed, *just showing how a Christian can live!* In so many connections we do fail to manifest that in our day-to-day dealings with our fellows.

We fail often enough with our own brethren, and how much more with the world. And it brings leanness into the soul.

We tend to view our Christian life from too intellectual a viewpoint. Even our entrance thereinto is carefully prescribed for us in technical terms; repentance, justification, consecration, sanctification, glorification; and too often the whole matter is presented to the immature believer as though he is invited to enter into a commercial agreement with God. Cold as ice, and about as inviting! And all the time we are conscious—or ought to be conscious—of the warm, vibrant words "*sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not . . . a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*"

This is the source from which we must get the oil for the light, the virtue for the salt, the power to raise that city to its elevation on the hill; here, at the foot of the Cross, where repentance and determination, contrition and hope, renunciation and consecration, go hand in hand. Not in the emotionless formalism of the detached acceptance of a cold invitation "if ye do *this . . . I will give you that*" but in the spontaneous, eager realisation of tender, compassionate tones "My son, give me thine heart . . . who will go for us?", lies the power that will make us to "shine forth as the sun" here and now in the sight of all men. In that experience, and that alone, shall we realise what was in the mind of the "beloved physician", Luke, when he beheld the fellowship of the Early Church and wrote of them, "*praising God, and having favour with all the people: and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" Is it any accident that those two phrases are associated so intimately together?

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## THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

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"There was a certain man," said Jesus one day, "which had a steward." By no means an unusual statement to make; all rich men had stewards, servants who had been with the family for many years and could be trusted with the duties of the position. The office dated back to very early times, for Abraham himself had a steward, "Eliezer of Damascus" (Gen. 15, 2), and to that steward was entrusted the task of going five hundred miles into Aram-Naharaim to seek a suitable bride for Isaac, the son of Abraham. The responsibilities of the steward were heavy; he administered the whole of his master's estate, saw to his business matters, controlled the routine of the house, supervised the other servants, and had charge of the children until they came of age. (This latter fact is alluded to by Paul when he says in Gal. 4, 1-2: "The heir, as long as he is a child . . . is under tutors and *governors* until the *time appointed of the father*." The word "governors" is the one used elsewhere in the New Testament for "stewards"—*oikonomos*).

But this particular steward, continued Jesus, was dishonest. He neglected his lord's interests and wasted his resources, so that at last he was required to make up his accounts and relinquish his position. And the unjust steward was afraid, afraid for the future. He had made no friends, none to whom he could turn in this hour of adversity; he had lived a life of ease and self-indulgence and forgotten how to labour that he might sustain himself. He had been proud and haughty and now was appalled at the thought of living as a dependent upon the charity of others. "What shall I do?" he asked himself despairingly. "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." And in searching for a way out of his plight the baseness of his nature came to the top and he saw a way of making himself friends at the eleventh hour, friends who by reason of the obligation under which he would place them might at least give him food and shelter.

In order to understand the story aright we must examine its background. The setting is an agricultural one. The "debtors" who owed oil and wheat were evidently tenants of the lord's land and, as was the custom, paid their rent in kind — an agreed amount of the produce of the land. The previous expression of the steward, "I cannot dig," indicates the same thing; apparently the only manual work which was open to him in the particular community was agricultural. The scene of the story is

in the country and not in the city. It would have been the steward's duty to adjudge equitable rents to the tenant farmers who leased the land, and the "hundred measures of oil" and "hundred measures of wheat" probably represented the yearly amount due. (In English measure these equalled approximately 750 gallons of olive oil and one thousand bushels of wheat). It is sometimes suggested that the steward was executing a good stroke of business for his lord in that he secured payment of some apparently hopeless debts by offering a liberal discount for immediate settlement. Nothing of the kind! The steward, knowing he was shortly to leave his lord's service was deliberately reducing the tenants' rents and altering the legal documents, the "leases," which stipulated the annual amount to be paid. The word rendered "bill" in "take thy bill, and write fifty" and again in verse 7, refers to such legal contracts, which were usual in Jesus' day, as in our own. There is no doubt that the steward had the legal right to adjust the rents when his lord's interests demanded it; but in this instance his action was dictated by his own interests and to his lord's hurt. It may have been legally permissible, but was morally unjustifiable. In this way he hoped to place these tenants under an obligation to him so that he might reasonably expect some consideration at their hands when his stewardship terminated. He evidently did not intend to work for his living if he could find someone to give him hospitality in return for services rendered.

"And the lord" (the steward's master) "*commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely*"—shrewdly, according to Weymouth and the Twentieth Century versions—"for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." The master was broad-minded enough and sufficient of a "business man" himself, to admit that the unjust steward had shown his own self quite capable of sharp business deals when his own interests were involved. There is no indication that the notice of dismissal was rescinded; he was a rogue, albeit a clever rogue, and he had to go; but the master did at least commend him for his shrewdness as he went.

But Jesus did not commend the man. To think that He did so is completely to misunderstand the parable, and waste a lot of time and ingenuity attempting to demonstrate that the steward was doing a legitimate and right thing. Jesus called him

"the unjust steward," and Jesus, by His silence as much as by His sequel to the parable, pronounced His own condemnation upon this and all similar actions which are so often justified by the glib saying "business is business."

The story was ended. Turning now upon His disciples with a swift transition of thought, He said, perhaps with a vehemence greater than was His wont, "And yet *I* say unto *you*, make *friends* for yourselves out of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when *it* fails, those friends may receive you into everlasting habitations." The verse has been paraphrased a little in order to bring out its meaning. Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, the language of Galilee — at any rate, "mammon" is an Aramaic word—and the account was written by Luke in Greek. This verse has suffered a little in the process and is not altogether easy to follow in the Authorised Version. The conjunction "and" (*kai* in Greek) often has the meaning of "and yet" or "and so" when rhetorical emphasis is involved, as in this case, and "of" is *ek*, "out of." "Mammon" is a word indicating worldly wealth or riches of any kind, and the expression "when ye fail" is more correctly rendered "when *it* (i.e. the mammon of unrighteousness) fails."

The disciples, then, were to do, not what the steward *had* done, but what he had not done. He had the "mammon of unrighteousness," worldly riches, power, and opportunity, entrusted to him, but he had not used it to make for himself true friends who could be relied upon to stand by him in the day of adversity. He had used it for his own selfish ends instead. Then when the day that it failed him came, he was compelled to resort to very questionable tactics to ensure his future comfort, with no real guarantee even then that his end would be achieved. Now that, said Jesus in effect, may be all very well for the world. They order their daily lives in that way and they fully expect to do such things or have such things done to them and they call it "business." In their own day and generation they are shrewder than the children of light; but it is a shrewdness that will avail them nothing in the day when this world, and the fashion of it, passes away. But *I* say to *you*, you whose lives are given over to a higher and a holier purpose, use the possessions, influence or worldly opportunities you may have in such fashion as to win for yourselves friends in the heavens, so that when the worldly mammon fails, as fail it must at last, you will be welcomed with joy into an everlasting home.

Whilst the disciples were thinking that out, Jesus drove home the principle which His story was intended to illustrate. "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that*

*is unjust in the least is unjust also in the much*" (vs. 10). The extent of our faithfulness to the exceeding great privileges and responsibilities which God intends His consecrated children to hold and administer in the coming Age when the saints "reign with Christ" is measured by the degree of their faithfulness toward God in the administration of such worldly "mammon" as we may be possessed of now. If we have not placed it all on the altar and henceforth used it in the interests of God and His Kingdom, then we are not likely to be any more faithful when the day for "greater works" has dawned. "*If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*" How could we expect God to do so in such case?

"It is required of stewards," says Paul in I Cor. 4, 2, "that a man be found faithful". He was thinking of the stewards of his own day—perhaps even of this very parable, which must have been quite well known to him. We, the disciples of Jesus, are all stewards; and it is required of us all that we make good use of our stewardship while we have the opportunity, and not wait until the end of the day of grace before we commence thinking about it. The Parable of the Talents tells us that, as also the story of the rich young ruler who wanted to gain eternal life but not in a fashion that was going to cost him anything. And that story is repeated so often in these latter days. It is so easy to spend a few years in the first flush of enthusiasm for "the Truth," learning the doctrines of the faith and becoming familiar with the Holy Scriptures, accustomed to the routine of regular meetings and even perhaps the discharge of the duties falling to elders in the church, and then, having attained that stage, begin to devote increasing attention to a "career"—as if any earthly career matters to the child of God—or to success in business—as if any earthly business counts for aught in the sight of the Great King—or to any other of the hundred and one earthly interests which the Devil is always so industriously placing in the pathway of the consecrated. Jesus, knowing all this, told His disciples "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts (desires) of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4, 19). How true are those words, exemplified in the lives of Christians who for a time did "run well" but failed at the last.

To-day more than ever we need to take this parable to heart. There has been so much disappointment and disillusionment. So many things expected have not come to pass. As with Peter and the others after the Crucifixion, there is a tendency to go back to the fishing-nets and make the best of the world as it now is, hoping as we do so that we

can fit into our place in the Kingdom when at length it does come.

And of course—we cannot. Unless we have been constantly and tirelessly faithful in all respects to the unseen things whilst they remain unseen, we shall not see them when at length they become

revealed to the watching ones, and faith is swallowed up in sight. If we do not make heavenly friends *now* by our use of the earthly mammon, we shall not be of those who, when *it* fails, will be received with joy into the everlasting habitations.

## THE SUNDIAL OF AHAZ

*The story of a Divine Sign  
and a King's healing*

*"Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down."* (Isa. 38, 8).

This is another of those Old Testament incidents which seem to set at defiance the known laws of Nature and hence receive more than the usual meed of criticism from sceptics and "modern" Bible scholars. In reaction to this, many studious Christians of the traditional school have sought to explain the account along lines of scientific explanations of the miracle, always on the basis of the Authorised Version translation.

It was in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign that the apparently fatal illness gripped him, and the word of the prophet Isaiah came to him "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (Isa. 39, 1). And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, for he was a devout man, and he had worked hard for the good of his people of Judah, and his work was not yet finished. There was more in Hezekiah's grief than appears on the surface, too, for as yet he had no son, and the promised seed, Christ, could come only through his line. It seemed as though God intended to abandon His own purpose and the glory of Israel never come at all. So Hezekiah prayed that he might live.

His prayer was answered. He heard that fifteen years were to be added to his life. Isaiah was commissioned to give him a sign that the Lord would both heal his sickness and deliver the city from the army of Sennacherib, which was at the time threatening Judah, for this was before the celebrated destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem. (Isa. 38, 6-7 and 36, 1 and 37, 36). According to the parallel account in 2 Kings 20, 8-11, Hezekiah was given the choice of two signs. Either the shadow of the "sundial of Ahaz" was to go *down* ten degrees, or it was to *return back* ten degrees. Hezekiah chose the latter. It was a light thing, said he, for it to go down ten degrees; it did that every day anyway; "nay, let the shadow return back ten degrees."

And the shadow went back!

This sounds like a most amazing happening. It would seem to the ordinary man that the only way in which the shadow on a sundial could return would be for the sun to reverse its course and appear to traverse the sky from west to east, which, since it is the earth that moves, and not the sun, would imply that the earth had changed its direction of rotation and was turning backwards. On this basis the commentators of the nineteenth century endeavoured to demonstrate that such a thing did actually happen in the days of Hezekiah. A distinguished astronomer, E. W. Maunder, in the early years of this century produced elaborate calculations to support this view.

Before discussing the nature of the miracle, however, let us examine the story itself, and particularly the language used, and let us try to reconstruct for ourselves the scene of which Hezekiah's sick-bed formed the centre-piece on that memorable day.

Hezekiah lay sick in his palace. There is still much that is not known about the Jerusalem of his day, but the position of the palace of the Kings of Judah is definitely established. It lay a little to the south of the Temple, facing the Mount of Olives, which rises from the opposite side of the deep valley of the Kedron. From where Hezekiah reclined he could see the Mount directly before him and the Temple towards his left. Somewhere nearby, near enough for him to witness the "sign," was the "sundial of Ahaz."

Nowhere else in the Bible is there any mention of an instrument for measuring time. Until the days of Daniel, over a century later, there are no indications that the children of Israel divided the day into hours. One is justified therefore in looking a little more carefully at this expression "the sundial of Ahaz."

Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, was a great admirer of foreign innovations, as is evidenced by the account in 2 Kings 16, and he might very well have acquired a sundial for his palace grounds were such things in existence in his day. The earliest known sundials are of Greek manufacture and date

back only so far as the sixth century B.C., two hundred years later than the time of Ahaz. The Roman engineer Marcus Vitruvius, the author of a celebrated work on architecture and mechanical inventions, written in the time of Augustus Caesar, a few years before Jesus was born, says that the sundial was invented by Berosus, the Chaldean priest (*Arch.* 9, 9); and Berosus lived only about 250 B.C. Herodotus, the Greek historian (440 B.C.), states that the sundial was invented by the Babylonians (*Hist.* 2, 109), whilst in Homer's "*Odyssey*" (900 B.C.) there is an obscure reference to a means of observing the revolutions of the sun in use in Syria (*Odys.* 15, 402). It is just possible therefore that Ahaz could have possessed a sundial.

It is when the word "sundial" is examined that a totally different complexion is put upon the account. The Hebrew is *maalah*, which denotes an ascent by means of steps or stages, and is used for "steps" or "stairs" in the Old Testament. The *steps* of the altar in Exod. 20, 26, and of Solomon's throne in 1 Kings 10, 19 and 20, and the *stairs* of 2 Kings 9, 13 and Ezek. 40, 6 are "*maalah*." So, likewise, are the majestic words in Amos. 9, 6. "It is he that buildeth his *stories* in the heavens" where "*stories*" refer to the stages or terraces of the Babylonian *ziggurats* or temple towers, reared up into the heavens. And this word "*maalah*" is also translated *degrees* in the accounts of the miracle. The A.V. translators are guilty of an inconsistency here, for both "*degrees*" and "*sundial*" are from the same Hebrew word. Rotherham translates 2 Kings 20, 11, "*And he caused the shadow on the steps, by which it had gone down the steps of Ahaz, to go back ten steps*" and Isa. 28, 8, "*Behold me; causing the shadow on the steps, which hath come down on the steps of Ahaz with the sun, to return backwards ten steps.*"

The "sun-dial" of Ahaz, therefore, was in reality the "steps" or stairs of Ahaz. What stairs were these?

Nehemiah (3, 15 and 12, 37) speaks of "stairs that go down from the city of David." Jerusalem was built on several hills with two deep valleys—those of the Kedron, and Gay-Hinnom (Gehenna), intersecting them, and there were various flights of stone steps built up the sides of these valleys. It is known that one such staircase descended the slope from the King's Palace eastward down to the Horse Gate in the city wall (Neh. 3, 28; 2 Chron. 23, 15; Jer. 31, 40) and another ascended from the Horse Gate up to the south side of the Temple. By means of these two stairways the King possessed what amounted to a private way to the Temple, and there is one rather obscure passage in 2 Kings, 16, 18 which indicates that Ahaz made some alteration to one of these stairways. It seems then that the stairs

leading down from the Palace to the Horse Gate are those to which reference is made in Isaiah.

Now these steps, running roughly eastward down the slope, with the lofty buildings of the Palace at the top between them and the afternoon sun, were shrouded in shadow every afternoon. As soon as the sun had passed the zenith at midday, the shadow of the Palace roof would fall upon the topmost step, and thereafter as the sun sank towards the west, so the shadow would grow longer and creep down the stairs to the end. That is the shadow that had gone down ten of the steps ("*degrees*" in the A.V.) at the time of the sign. It must have been about the middle of the afternoon. Hezekiah had lain there many afternoons watching the shadow of his father's house creep down those stairs until at length, as it reached the Horse Gate at the bottom, the sun sank below the horizon behind his palace, the daylight rapidly faded and the short Palestinian twilight gave way to black night. So is the fate of my father's house, he must have thought bitterly; I am to die childless; there will be none of my line to reign after me on the throne of the Lord in Judah; all the promises made to the fathers will fail; there can never be a son of David to become David's Lord. God hath forgotten to be gracious.

And then he saw the sign! Josephus makes it plain in his account of the circumstances (*Ant.* 10, 2, 1) that the shadow had gone down ten steps of the staircase and then returned. What had happened? What was it in this inexplicable phenomenon that convinced Hezekiah that God was with him and would heal him?

It is not necessary to suppose that God interfered so much with the normal course of Nature as to halt and reverse the onward progression of the sun through the sky. Less spectacular and unlikely causes would have produced the effect. Under certain climatic conditions clouds of minute ice crystals can form at a great height in the upper reaches of the air; the apparent result as seen from the earth is the appearance of a band of light passing through the sun, and two additional suns, one on either side of the true sun. This effect, which is known as *parhelia*, or "mock sun," is due to the refraction of the sun's light as it passes through the prismatic ice crystals on its way to the earth. If now a cloud, at a much lower altitude, should obscure real sun and the western "mock sun" over a certain district, the only light reaching that district is from the eastern "mock sun," and the effect is as if the sun had receded eastwards by a certain fixed amount (always equal to one and a half hours of our time). Two occasions when this actually happened are on record; one was on 27th March, 1703, at Metz, in France, when the shadow on the sundial of the Prior of Metz was displaced by one

and a half hours. The other occasion was on the 28th March, 1848, over parts of Hampshire when the same effect was observed.

Now this is a perfectly logical scientific explanation and the miracle could very well have been due to this cause, except for one consideration. Hezekiah had been at great pains to put down Baal worship, the constant curse of Israel, and to restore the worship of Jehovah. The sun was the visible symbol of Baal. Such a phenomenon as is described above would be probably interpreted by those who witnessed it as a manifestation of the power and interest of Baal. The credit for the sign, and consequently for the cure of Hezekiah's sickness, would have been given, not to the God of Israel, but to Baal. Much of Hezekiah's own good work would have been undone. For this reason it is unlikely that God would use the sun as an instrument for effecting the "sign."

Is there then another possible means by which the miracle could have been performed, more in keeping with the majesty and power of God and more indisputably attributable to Him? The fact that as Hezekiah looked down his staircase the Temple of the Lord was in full view upon his left, at the summit of Mount Moriah, suggests that there is.

The shadow of the palace lay ten steps down the staircase. Only the return of the sunlight could remove it—or a light brighter than sunlight! Every Israelite knew that there was such a light; the holy "*Shekinah*," that supernatural light that shone from between the cherubim in the Most Holy, that had been the guide of Israel in the wilderness in those long ago Exodus days, a "fire by night," one that had been seen on rare occasions when God had cause to manifest His majesty and power in visible form. That fierce light, brighter than the sun at noonday, had flashed out from the Tabernacle to slay Nadab and Abihu when they offered "strange fire" before the Lord (Lev. 10, 2); it had flooded the camp at the time of Korah's rebellion (Num. 16, 42-45); it had filled Solomon's Temple at its dedication. Isaiah saw it once in vision when he received his commission of service (Isa. 6, 1). Is it possible that as Hezekiah gazed still upon the staircase, waiting for the sign that the Lord had promised him, the wondrous glory of the *Shekinah* did indeed blaze out from that sanctuary on the hill, blotting out the brightness of the sun itself, lighting all Jerusalem with its radiance? The shadow on the steps would have vanished in an instant, and the whole scene, the Palace Gardens, the stairs themselves, the city wall and the Horse Gate far below, the Mount of Olives on the opposite side of the valley, stand out in sharp relief vividly delineated in that blinding white light. If this is

indeed what happened on that memorable day, what possible doubt could remain in Hezekiah's mind? More convincing by far than any natural celestial phenomenon, this message from the sanctuary was as the appearance of God Himself.

All Jerusalem must have seen it. All Jerusalem must have interpreted it aright. The *Shekinah* came forth only for destruction or blessing. Hezekiah was a good king, a God-fearing man. It could only mean that he would recover, that he would live to play his part in the fulfilment of Divine promise, that there would yet be a son to sit upon the throne of the Lord after him, that the destiny of Israel would yet be achieved. The news would travel quickly, and before long all Judea would know what had happened, and that the king's life had been prolonged for fifteen years.

So the wonderful story concludes with Hezekiah going up to the Temple to sing his songs of praise to the stringed instruments, all the days of his life, for his deliverance and for the marvellous happenings (Isa. 38, 20). Fifteen songs did he compose, and named them "songs of the steps." They appear to-day in the Book of Psalms as Psalms 120 to 134, and they are headed "songs of degrees" by the A.V. translators. (The ascription of some of them to David is incorrect). For ever afterwards they were used in the Temple ceremonies, and to-day we use them still, a memorial of that day when the Lord turned back the shadow that was over the house of Israel, and His glory was seen in Jerusalem.

### "HARPAZO"—"CAUGHT UP"

The most significant use of this word is in I Thess. 4, 17: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be *caught up* together with them in the clouds." This short note will not attempt to interpret the text but to indicate the meaning of the word as it is used in the Scriptures, leaving those interested to make use of the information given in their own studies of that chapter.

The meaning of *harpazo* in classical Greek is "to seize, to carry off by force, to claim for one's self, to snatch away." The word occurs about sixteen times in the New Testament and usually with one of those meanings. Thus we have in the words of Jesus:—

John 10, 12: "The wolf *catcheth* them."

Matt. 13, 19: "The wicked one *catcheth away* that which was sown."

Matt. 7, 15: "Inwardly they are *ravens* wolves."

Matt. 11, 12: "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent *take it by force*."

John 10, 28: "No man is able to *pluck them out*

of my Father's hand."

Luke uses the term twice:—

Acts 23, 10: "Commanded the soldiers to *take him by force from among them.*"

Acts 8, 39: "The Spirit of the Lord *caught away Philip.*"

John twice:—

John 6, 15: ". . . come and *take him by force to make him a king.*"

Rev. 12, 5: "Her child was *caught up to God, and to his throne.*"

Jude once:—

Jude 23: "Save with fear, *pulling them out of the fire.*"

From all of these instances it is clear that the word is used in the sense of a sudden, forcible seizure or "snatching away" as a wild beast snatches its prey or soldiers take their prisoner. Paul must have had this in mind when he selected the word to describe an experience of his own, and, in another place, the glorification of the Church. He uses it in 2 Cor. 12, 2 and 4, where he speaks of himself as being "*caught up*" to the third heaven, and to paradise, and then again in I Thess. 4, 17 to describe the gathering of the living members of Christ's church to their Lord at His Second Advent. In these instances, the thought is that of a sudden transition from the earth to the heavens "in the twinkling of an eye," as Paul says in another place.

## TWELVE LEGIONS

"*Thinkest thou not that I could ask of my Father, and He would presently* (meaning "immediately" in the 17th century when the A.V. was translated) *give me more than twelve legions of angels?*" (Matt. 26, 43).

A Roman legion consisted of six thousand soldiers. Jesus meant His disciples to understand that His Father was able to send to His assistance a heavenly host greater than would be a Roman army of seventy-two thousand men. "*The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.*" (Psa. 68, 17). "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" The disciples had looked and hoped for a time when the Son of Man would come in the glory of His Kingdom attended by thousands of angels — and that time Jesus had told them was certain to come; but it was not yet. To strengthen their failing faith Jesus assured them that He had but to ask, and the heavenly legions would come to His aid — but He had no intention of asking. "*Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.*" (Luke 24, 26).

Surely though those legions were there already,

like the angels at the time of Elisha's peril (2 Kings 6, 17) in their invisible hosts doing honour to the Son of God in the act of ensuring salvation for the world. How they must have watched and waited, those three days when the Son of Man lay in the tomb; and what a chorus of heavenly praise and exultation must have ascended to God when, on the third day, the defences of the grave were thrown down, and the One they knew and loved so well arose "in the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7, 16) never again to limit His glory to the limits of humanity. Resplendent in His resurrection body, the victorious King Who had vanquished the power of evil forever: with what joy must His ascension to the Throne of His Father have been attended!

"*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'*" (Rev. 5, 13).

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Spiritual dryness and lethargy can come about by sheer neglect, or it can be the result of some little "incident" where we could not have our own way, and hence we have failed to assemble together, and slowly the drought has crept over our souls. No stimulus from fellowship, no iron sharpening iron, no occasional songs of praise to lighten the load on one's shoulders, and later on, no joy or exultation in the morning and evening prayer, till we shrink from the bending of the knee—and then, all the little weaknesses unconfessed and unforgiven. Then the heaven becomes as brass and there is no rain for us.

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It is by looking down into the puddles of human scoldiness and sin that the life of the Christian becomes one of gloom and sadness. To look up to the stars and to see that the Way of the Cross (with its submissiveness to the Will of God) is all of a peace with Heaven, as well as with Earth, will enlarge one's outlook, and make one to realize that God's Sovereignty is not just of yesterday or even today, but is forever and ever; is not just of one's own little half-inch circle, but spans the broad horizons of all the mighty deep above us.

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Every day is crowded with minutes, and every minute with seconds, and every second with opportunities to develop fruitage.

## DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a  
great man's faith

### 13. The Den of Lions

It was during the two years short reign of Darius the Mede that Daniel's enemies made one more—unavailing—attempt to get rid of him. The stalwart old man had survived many such plots in the course of his long life; perhaps by now he was getting used to them. At any rate there is no indication that his faith wavered in the slightest. As an example of the strength of character a firm faith in God can develop in a man's life the story of Daniel stands supreme. Never did he concede one jot or tittle to the forces of the enemy; at no time were his principles compromised. Fearless before kings, humble before God, his life reveals that combination of iron strength and dependent pliancy which made him so useful an instrument in the hand of God. We can look for no better instance among the records of faithful men upon which to model our own Christian lives. Some there were, following Jesus for a time, who turned back and "walked no more with him." The same sad sequel writes "*finis*" across the pages of many believers' lives when the discouragements of the way, the opposition of God's enemies, the attractions of other things, prove too strong for the faith and hope which alone will enable any disciple to "endure to the end." Like Israel of old, who "could not enter in because of unbelief," so do many Christians falter and fall in the wilderness instead of marching onward to enter the Promised Land. The example of Daniel's life shows what inflexible devotion to the things of God and unshakeable faith in His power and providence can do to a man who builds those things into his life's experience.

Nothing of this was in the minds of those presidents and princes who at this time were conspiring against Daniel. Unscrupulous men of the world, determined to dispose once and for all of the man who by his rectitude and uprightness was a constant threat to their nefarious ways, they hatched a plot which seemed certain of success. No ordinary methods would do; this was a man incorruptible, proof against either threats or bribes, influenced neither by fear nor greed. None of the ordinary methods of achieving their object would serve. They could not accuse him of disloyalty to the king or State, for he was manifestly the soul of integrity. They could not insinuate that he was guilty of personal enrichment from the public purse, or of taking bribes to pervert the course of justice; his private life was open for all to see. They could

not impugn or malign his character, for all men knew him to be blameless and irreproachable. And in desperation at last these men said "*We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God*" (ch. 6, vs. 5). They could only hope to bring about the downfall of Daniel by making his loyalty to God a crime in itself.

So the plot was hatched. It was a simple enough scheme once the bare idea had crossed someone's mind. From its very nature it could not fail to work. Daniel's very firmness of character would be the sure guarantee of his undoing. As the details were unfolded and discussed there would be many nodding heads and covert smiles. The Jew was as good as dead already. Probably the principal contestants for Daniel's soon-to-be vacant office began to eye one another speculatively and under the cover of a spurious heartiness in discussion, began to take each others' measure for the further scramble for power which would follow immediately after Daniel had been disposed of.

Agreement reached, the band of rogues sought audience with the king, and outlined their proposal. Briefly put, it provided that for a period of thirty days supplicatory prayer should be offered to no God or man save the king. The brief account in the sixth chapter of Daniel gives no supporting reasons for this apparently pointless piece of authoritarianism, no arguments to justify what must have appeared to be a particularly foolish and vapid decree. Nevertheless the litigants may well have made out a case for their request, and that without revealing the true purpose behind the scheme. The Babylonians were worshippers of many gods, spirits and demons, but the Persians were monotheists, worshippers of one god, Ahura-Mazda, the god of light. The argument may well have been that this thirty days' decree would have the effect of suspending temporarily the native people's customary worship and introducing them to the idea of monotheistic worship, the worship of one God. But since the god of the Persians was not well known in Babylon, why not let him be worshipped in the person of the king as his representative? Thus the vanity of Darius would be flattered and his ear lent more willingly to the proposal. The Roman emperors had Divine honours paid to them while yet living and the early Christians suffered for refusing to give homage to

them as gods; here at a much earlier date it seems that the same situation was to face the saintly Daniel.

The little that is known of Darius the Mede — and that little is based entirely upon the picture of him that we have in the Book of Daniel — seems to show him up as a weak monarch. Although he was the son of an active and warlike Median king, Astyages, he reigned only as a puppet under the direction of the more vigorous Cyrus. He was not a young man—sixty-two at the capture of Babylon — and he reigned in Babylon for only two years. The manner in which the conspirators put the decree before him and practically demanded his signature seems as though he was brow-beaten into signing. It might well have been that, faced with a united front of all his principal men except Daniel, he yielded against his own better judgment. It might not have occurred to him that Daniel would object to the decree; after all, Daniel himself was a monotheist, worshipping one God, and might reasonably be expected to support the general idea. Darius probably saw little difference between the one God of the Persians and the one God of Daniel, and perhaps reasoned that at any rate Daniel could not seriously object. At any rate he signed.

Of course Daniel behaved in the manner expected by the plotters. The habit of over sixty years was not going to be abrogated on account of the king's decree. Three times a day, from his earliest youth in Babylon, he had prayed with his face towards Jerusalem, no wall or door intervening, giving open testimony to his faith that one day the House of God would be re-established in that present desolate city. He must have done that when a lad in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, in full view of his pagan companions. At first they would have mocked and derided him; later they perhaps came to respect him. There may have been an occasion when an imperious summons to the presence of his royal master came to him when thus engaged, as happened once to a British Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, in the days of Queen Victoria. He would most surely have behaved as Mr. Gladstone did on that occasion, continuing with his prayers unhurriedly, and if then faced with an angry demand for an explanation, as was the case with that Christian statesman, returned the same answer: "I was engaged in audience with the King of kings." Daniel's enemies probably knew his history and judged rightly his behaviour. Assembling at the appropriate time, as expected, they found Daniel with his windows wide open, praying to his God, in flat defiance of the royal decree.

With what glee and triumph must the plotters have hastened to the royal palace and sought

audience with King Darius. They were careful, however, to get the king irrevocably committed and to that end they first had him confirm his earlier concurrence. "*Hast thou not signed a decree . . . ?*" and so on. True enough, agreed the unsuspecting king; a decree which, once signed, cannot be revoked. That was the law of the Medes and Persians and the king confirmed his upholding of the law. Then the mask was thrown off. "*That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree which thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day*" (vs. 13).

Too late, the king perceived the trap into which he had fallen. Verse 14 says that he was "displeased with himself." He must have realised that the one man he could really trust was now, by his own stupid action, condemned to death. He might also have reflected that he himself, deprived of Daniel's loyalty and integrity, would be more at the mercy of these scheming conspirators than ever before. So he "*laboured until the going down of the sun to deliver him.*"

The presidents and princes were ready for this. They knew it would come. Before long they were back again, reminding the king of his obligations under the State Constitution. The king realised that there was no way out; the sentence would have to be executed. It must have been with a heavy heart that he gave the necessary orders, and the Palace guards went off to arrest the nation's Chief Minister and bring him to the place of execution.

Verse 16 is a little puzzling. It reads as though Darius assured Daniel that his God, whom he served continually, would certainly deliver him. Whether this was an expression of faith or merely a soothing last assurance to a man he regarded as good as dead, is not clear; when he came to the den next morning he was not half so sure about it. But it was now too late for further talk. The entire company came to the den, usually a large round pit in which the animals could roam freely but from which they could not escape; approached by means of a steeply sloping tunnel from the surface. The unresisting victim was pushed down the tunnel and slid helplessly to the floor of the pit where the lions awaited him. The iron grille at the entrance to the tunnel was shut and locked and sealed with the king's seal and those of the conspirators so that there need be no suspicion next morning that any attempt to deliver the condemned man had been made. There would, of course, be guards posted at the gate, just in case any of Daniel's own friends should attempt a rescue during the night. These precautions taken, the party dispersed; the king, to a miserable evening and a sleepless couch, the others, to a sound night's

sleep in the satisfaction of a job well done.

Next morning "*the king arose very early*"—much earlier apparently, than the men whose scheming had created this situation. The account says that he "*went in haste to the den of lions.*" He must at least have had some glimmer of hope that Daniel's God had been able to deliver him, or he would not have made such an early morning expedition. His faith was only very rudimentary, however; we are told that he "*cried with a lamentable voice, O Daniel . . . . is thy God . . . . able to deliver thee?*" He was by no means over sanguine, but he evidently thought that there was at least a chance.

Calm and unruffled came the familiar voice from the depths below. "*O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me . . . . .*"

Our God does not treat all His saints in the same fashion. Plenty of Christians were thrown to the lions in the days of pagan Rome, but God did not intervene to save them. He did intervene to save Daniel. That deliverance was for a definite purpose in the Divine Plan. Daniel yet had more work to do. The death of those many Christians in the Roman arena was for a definite purpose also, for "*the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*" Whether in life or in death, we are the Lord's, and he will dispose of our earthly lives in the way that is good in His sight, and in the interests of His fulfilling purpose for all mankind. Only when we are all united together in the "General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn" beyond the Veil, will we fully understand just how our apparently dissimilar experiences and varied fortunes in this life have been wrought together by our all-wise Father to effect the great end He has in view.

As far as Darius was concerned, Daniel's reassuring words brought about a swift revulsion of feeling. "*Then was the king exceeding glad.*" Not only was he glad for Daniel's sake, but also for his own. Here was a golden opportunity to rid himself of the men whom he now realised to be a menace to his own security. Probably some of them at least were Persians, and more disposed to favour Cyrus than Darius. This was the psychological moment, while the wonder of the miracle was fresh upon the minds of the king's soldiers and servants. The king was not slow to take advantage of the chance. In the first place Daniel could legitimately be freed, since the decree merely stipulated that he should be cast into the den of lions without defining the consequences. The plotters had hardly thought that necessary. The law had been fulfilled and now Daniel could be released. The king saw to it that he was so freed without further delay. The same

guards who cast him in now had the somewhat more ticklish task of getting him out. They doubtless hoped as they did so that the restored Chief Minister would not hold their action of the previous night against them when he resumed his administrative duties. With the same thought in mind they were probably only too pleased to show diligence in executing the king's next order, to the effect that they should arrest the men who were responsible for the plot against Daniel and cast them without further ado to the lions from which Daniel had so recently escaped. The summary nature of this arbitrary command would support the idea that the men concerned were taken from their beds before they had time to realise what had happened, were hurried to the pit and without further ceremony flung in. Their unhappy wives and families were treated in similar fashion — a piece of Oriental barbarity which was quite the usual thing in those days, the idea being to ensure that no descendant of the criminal should live or be born to perpetuate his name. This ferocious act is quite in keeping with what might be expected of Darius; his father Astyages was one of the most inhuman monsters of antiquity and it is not surprising to find a streak of the same characteristic in his son.

The story ends with another decree, this time without any prompting. Darius sent a command to all parts of the empire requiring that worship and reverence be paid to the God of Daniel. It need not be thought that this implied the conversion of Darius or the establishment of Judaism as the State religion. It need only mean that Darius was sufficiently impressed by the manifest power of the God of Daniel that he gave the seal of his royal approval upon the worship of that God, wheresoever and by whomsoever performed. It might well be that this incident provided the starting point for that tolerance with which the Medo-Persian rulers regarded the Jewish religion, leading only a year after this happening to the decree of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return and build their Temple, and later on for the favour they enjoyed, in the days of Nehemiah, when the city Jerusalem itself was rebuilt.

To Christians it is just one of the many examples in history where God shows us all His power to deliver, when deliverance is in accord with His will and His Plan. This story shows us that God *can* deliver; whether in any given case, or in our own case, He *will* deliver, rests again upon the needs of His Plan and His designs for us personally. Those of us whose lives are given over completely to serve Him and be used by Him would not have it otherwise; for He knoweth best.

(To be continued).

## **THE GATES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The spirit of worship as revealed in the Psalms

*"Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord—this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter—I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and a t become my salvation."* (Psa. 118, 19-21).

Upon many an occasion whilst the Temp'e at Jerusalem was standing those words were sung by the priests and worshippers at the great festivals. Israelitish worship was essentially a worship of praise, of song and of music, and this is but one of the many examples of the songs they sang, and which have been preserved for us in the Book of Psalms. We do well to consider something of this aspect of the Psalms, for an understanding of Israelitish methods and outlook respecting Divine worship cannot fail to be of assistance to us in our own attempt to relate the outward forms and ceremonies of worship to the inwardly felt reverence and adoration of our hearts. We know that God seeketh the worship only of those that will worship Him in spirit and in truth, but it is also true that our very sincerity and fervour should lead us to worship God in a dignified manner and so far as possible in appropriate surroundings. Some consideration of the ways in which Israel of old waited on God with praise and prayer can help us to trace more clearly the effect of outward forms in promoting the spirit of true worship.

Since the Book of Psalms is really the record of Israel's public worship and contains the songs, chants and prayers which were used in the Temple ceremonies this short study will not go outside the Psalms for its material. Within that Book there is contained a wealth of inspiration for sincerity and purity in worship.

One of the most characteristic praise-prayers is found in Psalm 95. *"O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods,"* and so on. Notice that the worshippers have commenced their service on a note of praise; more than that, on a note of joyful praise. This is characteristic of Israel's worship; their first impulse upon coming together was toward a lifting up of voices jointly in joy and gladness, and in gratitude of heart for all God's mercies, a gratitude that was not only felt inwardly but expressed outwardly. *"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"*

(Psa. 118, 24). The very first element of their worship was a full, frank acknowledgment of Divine supremacy over all things and of their gratitude because of that supremacy. The valleys and hills, the seas and land, were made by Him and are His by right, and those who are His children have the privilege of using for their own pleasure and joy the things that He has made, and the obligation of bringing to Him for His pleasure and joy the offerings of praise and thanksgiving which such beneficence has inspired.

This leads quite naturally to the second element in worship, a quiet and reverent acknowledgment of that moral responsibility to be conformed to God's laws and to live life in God's way which lies upon every man. One can almost sense the change in tone in verse 6 of Psalm 95. The major key of loud praise has dropped to a minor key of quiet reverence and awe. *"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."* It is now that the mind turns away from the outward things of the earth which God has created, the appendages of life, of happiness, of enjoyment, for which praise has just been offered, and diverts its thoughts inward to the heart and soul. God did not only make the hills and valleys, the sea and land; He made us, and He made us His people, His flock. He is not only a Creator, He is also a Shepherd and a Father. And the causes of worship, of reverence and of praise that lie within the human frame are greater by far than those that reside in the earth, which is itself but a minister to that same human frame, for God created the earth for man, and not man for the earth. Man is the glory and king of this material creation—or will be when the Divine purpose has been fully achieved. So the joyful ebullient praise that is prompted by the material blessings surrounding man gives place to reverent adoration, a recognition of the spiritual blessings that find their place within a man's heart. Therefore in Psalm 96, 8 the exhortation is *"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth"* and in Psalm 29 *"Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."* In all of this there is the realisation that to worship God in holiness is

a thing of beauty, that the yearning of the human heart for that which brings beauty into the life and drives out the drab and sordid can be met, and fully met, in joint worship before God.

Is not this worth considering in our own fellowship and our own worship? We too have much that is drab and commonplace in our daily lives. The conditions attendant upon earning a living or managing a home in this present day are oftentimes dull and monotonous to an extreme, and even we who have the knowledge of Divine truth to cheer our way feel the pressure of the times. It cannot possibly be otherwise. The world feels the same thing and rushes madly from one form of amusement to another in the endeavour to forget. Man was made to be happy and to enjoy the good gifts of God, and now that human selfishness and sin has taken away much of the possibility of happiness humanity is in danger of breaking down. Now the fact that in general we do not desire and could not be content with the amusements which do temporarily satisfy the majority of people does not dispose of this fact that the drabness and ugliness of life has its effect upon us as on them. We too need something that will counteract these things and show us visions of beauty in which we can rejoice and find satisfaction and rest of heart. That counteracting force is to be found in worship—sincere, selfless worship offered in joint communion with others of like mind in an atmosphere of beauty and peace. Worship that ascends in chariots of praise to the highest heaven, that bears up the worshipper himself as it were on eagles' wings and takes him in the spirit of his mind to the holy place where God is seated upon His Throne, guiding the destinies of the world that He has created.

We need then by all means possible to develop within our fellowship an increasing appreciation of the importance of worship—and, too, of joint fellowship together in worship, of communal worship. And that worship must be a joyful and happy worship—every gathering for worship an holy convocation unto the Lord where expressions of thankfulness and thanksgiving are predominant. Even although there must be other occasions where life is lived to the accompaniment of quieter and more subdued strains, where grief afflicts the heart and tears may be not far away, the time of worship will be a palliative to these things and call forth the happiness and joy that resides in the possession of the "deep things of God." The Psalmist felt like this when he sang of his dark moments, of the contradiction of sinners against himself, of tears by day and by night, and yet "*I had gone with the multitude, I went with them in the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude*

*that kept holyday*" (Psa. 42, 4). He found the comfort his soul desired in going up with his brethren, with praise and song, to worship the Lord in His holy temple.

This brings us to the third very important element in our worship—the place where worship is offered. In natural reaction against the formalism and ceremony of the great Churches there is a tendency to go the other extreme and eschew all outward aids to beauty in worship. The Psalmist knew as well as do we that God may be worshipped in any place and does not require that the voice of praise ascend acceptably only from marble halls and prayers be offered to the accompaniment of swinging censers. David must have known better than any man how near God could be when alone on the mountaintops at night, or lying in the field with the flocks in the heat of a summer day. But the Psalmist also knew what inspiration could be given his soul by the mere sight of the Temple buildings on the summit of Mount Moriah, the thrill of heart as the multitudes moved slowly up the wide stairways and assembled in the great court, the awe and reverence that filled the soul as the music of harps and chanting of singers fell upon the ear. That was why he could say with feeling "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*" (Psa. 122, 1). The very suggestion of going up to worship the Lord in company with the brethren is one that should induce feelings of gladness and happiness.

After all, just as Jesus at twelve years of age was found in His Father's courts, because that was the natural place in which to be found, so should we always feel as if the place of worship is our rightful spiritual home. It should possess a magnetism and an attraction for us that is possessed by no other place on earth. We should be conscious of an intense, a longing, desire to be there and to commune with our brethren of like faith, and to join with them in praise and prayer, and share with them the consciousness of the overspreading Spirit, come down to bless and fill each worshipper with the grace and truth of the Most High God. The Psalmist felt like that. "*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*" he cried, "*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*" (Psa. 84, 1-2). When he was away from the Temple he was an exile, a wanderer in strange lands. When he turned his steps towards the Temple he was coming home and as its familiar buildings came into sight he experienced the satisfaction of a spiritual hunger which could be met in no other way.

The word "amiable" in verse 1 really means "beloved." "*How beloved are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*" The thought of the word is shown very vividly in its other occurrences. "*The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him*" (Deut. 33, 12); "*So he giveth his beloved sleep*" (Psa. 127, 2); "*Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my well-beloved touching his vineyard.*" (Isa. 5, 1). Thus is our own worship made complete, when we can look toward the place of our meeting with our brethren, and call it "beloved." Thus may we combine the three-fold aspect of worship; our own personal coming to God in reverence and adoration; our joining with our brethren in united praise and prayer; our love and esteem for the place which is the place of our gathering, the place of our meeting, the place

of our fellowship and worship. "*THIS GATE OF THE LORD, INTO WHICH THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL ENTER.*" How fitting are the words of the Psalmist in Psa. 117, 17-19, expressive of this three-fold cord. How the words come down to us in all their majesty and all their music, telling us of saints in olden time who trod this way before us, bidding us follow faithfully in the same way, that we, like them, may one day stand before God in Zion.

*"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.*

*"I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people!*

*"In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem!*

**"PRAISE YE THE LORD."**

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## **THE PROMISE OF RESTITUTION**

### **Some Foundation Principles**

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The doctrine of the Messianic Age has its roots in the soil of Eden. In that intensely interesting record there are two important elements. One, that man was created sinless and physically perfect, capable of living for ever, the subsequent entry of sin being responsible for death and every other evil. The other, that God permitted the dominion of sin for a wise purpose and for a limited time; but its power will eventually be destroyed and mankind will be restored to primal perfection and attain everlasting life. The Messianic Age is the period during which this restoration process takes place, for those that are capable of conversion and reconciliation to God, and the exaction of sin's ultimate penalty in the case of those that are incorrigibly wicked.

The story of Eden is not only one of condemnation; it is one of hope, speaking of God's intention to undo the evil effects of sin. Historically it records the conditions that existed, when God, having brought the earth into existence and furnished it with plant and animal life, placed Man, his crowning glory, upon it, and commissioned him to increase and multiply, bring the earth under control, and make use of all its amenities in harmony with Divine law. Man was free to repudiate that law, but the consequence of violating the principles which God had ordained was cessation of his existence—death. "*In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*" Man did transgress; death reigned in consequence.

We do not fully understand the necessity of this temporary power of sin over the human race, but

that it can be and is being used by God as a means toward achieving His designs for the human race is undeniable. That in some sense we do not fully comprehend—or perhaps do not comprehend at all—perfection is attained through suffering (Heb. 2, 10) is indicated in the Scriptures. Something of this may be meant by the cryptic statement that was man's first ray of hope. "*I will put enmity between . . . thy seed and her (the women's) seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*" (Gen. 3, 15). That text has been conventionalised into an oft-quoted saying: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," and all Bible history and prophecy is a record of the development of this "seed" through the ages and its final and complete victory over the "serpent."

The next indication of the Divine purposes came when Abraham received his call to leave his native city and go into a land which God would show him. The Sumerians were the earliest civilised people of which records are available to us, and Sumerian Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, was a repository of learning and knowledge inherited from a still older civilisation of which no records have survived. It was from this people that Abraham came, and in the knowledge of their glorious past, when the true God was better known among them, that he left Ur to follow the leadings of that God. He eventually received the promise "*I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee . . . and in thy seed . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen. 12, 2-3, 22, 18). By virtue of this declaration Abraham,

and his posterity as yet unborn, were destined to become the means of fulfilling God's benevolent intentions to all mankind. Bible history records the vicissitudes that befell the descendants of Abraham until the promise, narrowed down to one specific line, that of Isaac and Jacob, began to bear fruit in the creation of a nation, the nation of Israel, at Mount Sinai in the fifteenth century B.C.

The significance of this event was profound. For the first time in history a nation was formally dedicated to God and commissioned to demonstrate the operation of Divine principles in national life, whilst being trained and fitted for the *ultimate conveyance* of God's blessings to all men. It could, in fact, have been the Kingdom of God upon earth in miniature. Israel as a nation came short of that ideal, and eventually lost its nationhood during the troubled period 600 B.C. to 135 A.D., but during the fifteen hundred years of its existence it acquired characteristics which peculiarly fitted many of its sons for God's future purposes in the administration of the world after the Second Advent of Christ.

Two-thirds of the Old Testament was written during this period, and these books trace the gradual revelation of God's purpose regarding the coming of Messiah to deliver the world from the power of sin and death. At first the emphasis was laid upon the deliverance of Israel and Divine retribution upon Israel's enemies, but intermingled with this theme there was consciousness of Israel's mission to "declare His salvation to the ends of the earth." The Psalms of David show the first real hope of an ultimate Messianic Kingdom in which "righteousness shall flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Psa. 72, 7), over which the Son of God will reign as King for the elimination of all evil (see the Second Psalm). Isaiah, the most farsighted of all the Hebrew prophets, described this Messianic kingdom as a time in which "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, . . . and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35, 1). He dwelt at length on the nature of the physical changes that will characterise that day, saying that God will create a new heaven and a new earth, a condition of things in which His elect will long enjoy the work of their hands. But in contrast to this sunlit picture of the Messianic Age Isaiah also drew another one of more sombre hue, that of Jehovah's "suffering servant" who by means of his suffering *now*, becomes fitted to be God's minister *then*, an instructor and guide of the nations. In the supreme sense these prophecies were fulfilled in the person and life of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for men, and having been raised from the dead awaits the time to set up His Kingdom on earth, in fulfilment of

all the Messianic prophecies and hopes of old. Isaiah spoke of both His Advents, the First, when He took upon Himself human nature in order to suffer and die as a man, and the Second, when He returns in the glory of His Divine nature to establish the Kingdom that is to restore the willing of mankind to human perfection and so complete the Divine purpose.

Jeremiah, two centuries later, described God's purpose concerning the Messianic Kingdom in terms of a covenant made between God and man. God is to put His law in the inward parts of men and write it in their hearts (Jer. 31, 33). All men will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Vs. 34; compare Isa. 11, 9). Daniel, nearly contemporary with Jeremiah, by virtue of his position as Prime Minister of Babylon brought into contact with the highest political movements of his day, stressed the essentially practical nature of the coming Kingdom, how that it is the world's only hope for peace and security; how that all existing forms of government and power must yield place to this universal empire of righteousness that is destined to rule the whole earth (Dan. chaps. 2 and 7). It was Daniel who saw clearly, more clearly, perhaps, than any before, that God must have trained and qualified men, thoroughly experienced in His laws and His righteousness, to administer that Kingdom, and this understanding had a profound effect upon later teaching regarding the Messianic Age. Ezekiel, the priest, a man gifted with prophetic vision of a very high order, described the forces of evil in the world hurling themselves in vain against the incoming Kingdom, and failing, vanishing away, to be succeeded by the orderly and beneficent system of Millennial government which he symbolised in his description of a vast and fair Temple from which proceeded a River of Life to the nations. This was the theme which led directly to John's description of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation nearly seven centuries later.

Thus, then, does the Old Testament describe this coming Age of blessing which will abolish evil, undo the havoc wrought at the time of Eden, reconcile man to God, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The work of converting the nations is to be effected by the "servant" which God has appointed and trained for that purpose, an essential factor in that training being the endurance of "suffering." In the end, death will be ended, the dead will have been raised, the righteous made perfect, sinners cut off, and sin no longer mar Divine creation.

The coming of Jesus Christ to earth threw a tremendous flood of light upon this almost purely

material, earthly, expectation. Until only a few centuries before Christ there was no idea that God's plans included any kind of spiritual salvation, and it was expected that the "righteous" would all attain their ultimate destiny here on earth. The teaching of Jesus as understood and expounded by the apostles and other New Testament writers reveals another phase, a spiritual phase, to God's plan, and shows that some from among the nations during the period between the First and Second Advents are called to inherit a spiritual or heavenly state of being by becoming personal disciples of Jesus Christ. In the wisdom of God all such are trained and fitted by suffering, as were their Israelitish predecessors, that they might be qualified to occupy a supremely important position in the work of the Messianic Age. That position is one of association with Christ, in the spiritual glory of His exalted station as King over the earth during the Millennium. The New Testament thus shows that the "Seed of Abraham" through which all families of the earth are to be blessed has a three-fold aspect. In the first place, Christ Himself is the Seed. Associated with Him in the heavens, having the oversight of all that is done during the Age of Blessing is His Church, comprising the faithful consecrated disciples of this present Age; for "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3, 29). Associated with both Christ and His Church in service, but stationed upon the earth, is the restored and purified nation of Israel, administering the Kingdom arrangements. Within these three aspects the whole of the promise concerning the "Seed" is contained.

Additional to this new understanding the teaching of Jesus made plain another principle upon which the work of the coming Age must rest, *the necessity for conversion and intelligent, willing acceptance of the moral laws which God has ordained for the orderly conduct of life.* The Jews of the time shortly before Christ visualised the righteousness of the Kingdom as a formal and ritualistic righteousness, a state in which observance of the Mosaic Law was the indispensable and all-sufficient condition of eternal life. Jesus changed all that and described a system in which every man will be led to see for himself the rightness of righteousness and the sinfulness of sin, and make his choice accordingly. God seeketh such to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4, 23). Hence Jesus called attention to the necessity of repentance and conversion to His way of life. For this reason He commissioned His disciples to become missionaries and preachers, calling men to repentance, and although they were thus bidden to preach in all the world for a witness during this Age, it is evident

that this is only by way of preparation for the next Age, when that missionary work will receive an impetus such as could not be given whilst the world is still in bondage to sin and death.

The New Testament, then, completes the Old Testament picture by revealing God's purpose to "send Jesus Christ" (Acts 3, 20), at His Second Advent, to establish an order of society upon earth in which all evil will be progressively eliminated, and men encouraged to repentance and conversion, and so to everlasting life. The resurrection of the dead to human life will take place at the commencement of this era, and thereafter death, except as the end of those who are incorrigibly determined to continue in evil, will cease. At the close of the period the formal Kingship of Christ over the nations will end, their probationary period having expired, and men will enter into full relationship with their Creator as sons of God.

*"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that did put all things under him, that God may be all in all."* (I Cor. 15, 24-28).

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### "KOLASIS" — PUNISHMENT

One of the last arguments to which the fast diminishing band of believers in eternal torment is driven in order to defend its position is the concluding verse of the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25, 46) "*and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.*" Some of the facts relating to the word here translated "punishment" may be of interest.

"Eternal punishment" in this verse is from the Greek "*aionian kolasis.*" "*Kolasis*" is a word which comes in the first place from "*kolos,*" to lop or prune, and the meaning of the word as defined by Thayer, Liddell and Scott, and others, is to check, curb, restrain or correct. Its usage in the time of the Lord was twofold, (a) punishment in the sense of restraint of the offender's power to continue his offence, and (b) disciplinary correction, or as we would say, chastisement. In classical Greek usage, Aristotle (350 B.C.) distinguished it from the other Greek word, used in Heb. 10, 29, for punishment, "*timoria,*" by saying that *kolasis* is disciplinary, referring to the correction of the offender, whilst *timoria* is penal, referring to the satisfaction of the judge. *Kolasis* is used only in three other instances, these being:—

2 Pet. 2, 9 "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the ungodly unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Acts 4, 22 "Finding nothing how they might punish them."

I John 4, 18 "Perfect love casteth out fear; for fear hath *torment*" (has a curbing or restraining influence).

"*Timoria*" is used only in Heb. 10, 29 "Of how much sorer *punishment* shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God . . ." In this verse the type of punishment carries with it the thought of penal infliction, whereas in the former scripture it is the fact that the evil-doer is put under restraint so that his evil doing is suppressed that is in view. It is often urged that since "*kolasisis*" does carry the thought of disciplinary correction equally with that of restraint or cutting off, it is equally logical to argue that the "everlasting punishment" of Matt. 25, 46 is, not "age-enduring cutting-off," but "age-enduring correction," and might very well refer to the "resurrection into judgment" of the Millennial Age itself (John 5). This suggestion is logical, but the term is used so infrequently in the New Testament that it does not seem wise to build too much upon its strict dictionary meaning when there are so few instances from which to discern in what sense the New Testament speakers and writers actually used it. It is better in such cases to interpret the word in the light of the context and adopt the particular shade of meaning which best fits that context. In verse 41 these same "goats" have addressed to them the words "*Depart from me, ye cursed* (separated or cut-off ones) *into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*" Rev. 20, 10-15 shows that this is the same thing as the "Second Death," the final end of sinners and of all that proves to be incapable of reconciliation with God and amenable

to the laws of His creation. Nowhere does the Scripture warrant the thought that those who come forth to the disciplinary judgment of the Millennial Age are regarded by Jesus as "cursed"; rather are they the "other sheep" of His fold which are eventually to be brought within the circle of the Father's family, if they will. The "cursed" must surely be those who reject all endeavours for their elevation to human perfection, and dying in their sin, become as though they had never been (Psa. 37, 10). We may consider ourselves justified therefore in interpreting this text "everlasting cutting-off" or "everlasting restraint" in the sense that those thus cut off are thereby permanently restrained from continuing to mar God's creation with their sin.

"*Aionian*" may mean everlasting in the sense of a long period of either definite or indefinite duration, or everlasting in the sense of being perpetual. A good example of both meanings appearing side by side in the same text is afforded by the Greek (Septuagint) version of Hab. 3, 6 where the prophet says "the everlasting (*aionian*) mountains were scattered, . . . his ways are *everlasting* (*aionian*). The mountains are everlasting in a limited sense only; change and decay will remove them eventually even though the time be thousands or millions of years. God's ways are perpetual; they can never be removed. In this light the text is perfectly logical and in harmony with Jesus' teaching. The one class go into everlasting life, the other into everlasting cutting-off; as Jesus said in another place "He that hath the Son hath life: but he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

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## THE PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE DELIVERANCE

A discussion on the relation of faith to Divine intervention

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"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distress . . ."

The noble strains of the 107th Psalm come very readily to the mind as soon as one thinks of Divine intervention. That song of praise is a wonderful rhapsody, with the goodness of God for its theme and the story of faithless Israel as its background. Time after time they left Him and went their way, but just so soon as they manifested sincere repentance and cried unto Him for succour, His ear was open to their plea and He reached down from Heaven to save them.

It is not only in the history of Israel that we discern the principles upon which God acts in saving those who are in sore need. We have the thrilling

stories of stalwart heroes of faith, and, too, of men whose faith was not so deeply rooted but who called upon their God when the experiences of life had taught the needed lesson; we have the story of the dispensations and the marks left upon history by the "stately steppings of our God." There is much in the way of material to be explored in the course of our investigation.

It is sometimes suggested that the purpose of Armageddon is to reduce mankind to a condition of utter despair in which they will be ready to accept proffered help from Heaven to restore order and tranquillity upon earth, and that, in the final phase of this same time of trouble, Israel, regathered in unbelief, hard pressed by the nations of the

world, will be miraculously delivered by direct intervention of God; that this miracle will open their eyes and that it will produce an immediate national conversion. The conclusions arrived at in this article point to another factor that should be taken into account — stated here as a general principle, it is that *God can only deliver when there is faith and belief*. Before Israel can be physically delivered, they must be nationally converted.

Our key scriptures for this study are Rom. 10, 21 and Heb. 3, 18-19. "*All day long*," declares God, in the former scripture, "*all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*" Paul is quoting from the 65th chapter of Isaiah, a chapter in which the prophet shows how impossible it is for God to deal with a people who deliberately turn away. The writer to the Hebrews, in his mournful recapitulation of the shortcomings of Israel, declared sadly "We see that they *could not enter in because of unbelief.*" (Heb. 3, 19). As one reads the stirring story of speedy entrance to the land of milk and honey, and perceives how quickly the veil of unbelief blotted out the fair vision of Canaan, one senses something of the tragedy which overtook this people who failed to realise that the first essential to the receiving of Divine bounty is—faith!

Right at the outset this principle was laid down. Israel in the wilderness stood in great need of deliverance from the native tribes of Canaan. If they were to inherit the land these peoples must be removed. God promised them that they would have no need to fight; He Himself would cast out those great nations, *if Israel would manifest faith and act accordingly* (Exod. 23, 20-28). The long story of war and fighting which characterised Israel's history both before and after they gained access to the Promised Land is a sorry commentary upon the high hopes with which they set forward after the signal overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. They "stood still" to "see the salvation of God" on that occasion (Exod. 14, 10-31), they had faith to cross Jordan at the time appointed, when the river was held back (Josh. 3, 9-17), and "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb. 12, 30). Nevertheless the people generally were always hovering on the edge of unbelief (see Num. 14, 10 and compare with verse 31), and apart from these three incidents they were normally in a condition of doubt at best and frank rebellion at worst; their hearts were not right before God and so He could not give them that free and open passage into the land which would have been possible had they taken Him at His word.

The next striking illustration germane to this study is that provided by the story of the Judges.

For several centuries after their settlement in Canaan, the children of Israel were ruled by "judges," national heroes who came to the fore in times of crisis and became the means of deliverance. Upon each such occasion the misery and calamity of Israel is said to have been due to their apostasy from God, and at each time, *except one*, we are told that when they realised their undone state, and *cried unto the Lord*, deliverance came; but not before they had thus demonstrated their repentance. Quite soon after their entrance into the land, it is said that "the children of Israel did evil . . . therefore the anger of the Lord was hot . . . and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia . . . and when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer . . . Othniel . . ." (Jud. 3, 5-11). So the land had rest forty years, "and the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord . . . (and) served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud . ." (Jud. 3, 22-30). This time the land had rest fourscore years, but once again the sad tale was repeated, and after Israel's repentance and once more crying to the Lord, Deborah and Barak were raised up (Jud. 4, 1-26); and after Barak there was Gideon (Jud. 6, 7 & 8); and after Gideon came the time of Jephthah, when Israel "cried unto the Lord, saying, we have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim" (Jud. 10, 10); and after Jephthah the most renowned of all the Judges, Samson.

With Samson there was a difference. It was not said of him, as it was said of all the others, that Israel cried unto the Lord, and He raised a deliverer. Israel had groaned under the yoke of the Philistines forty years (Jud. 13,1), but there is no indication that there was any true repentance or that they had come before God in faith for promised help in time of need. So it is not surprising, perhaps, that Samson, for all his boasted prowess, utterly failed to deliver Israel. He judged Israel twenty years (Jud. 15, 20), but during all that time, as is made clear in the Book of Judges, the Philistine yoke lay heavy on Israel, and at Samson's death Israel was still in bondage. Samson had not wrought any deliverance at all. Surely this is significant. The five judges who went forward on a basis of national repentance brought deliverance. The sixth, in some respects the mightiest of them all, failed to achieve any release; and this was the occasion when the people had failed to "cry unto the Lord."

There are several incidents in the later history of Israel which throw further light upon the operation of this principle. In the days of Samuel the Ark

of the Covenant, rashly taken into battle against the Philistines, had been lost to the enemy (I Sam. 4, 17), and after its recovery, in chastened repentant mood, the people of Israel "gathered together to Mizpeh . . . and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord'" (I Sam. 7, 6). It was in this condition of mind that they heard of the renewed aggression of their enemies, and were afraid, and called upon Samuel "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines" (vs. 8). Their newborn, fledgling faith was honoured, and the story tells how the Lord thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines and discomfited them.

Centuries later the same problem confronted Jehoshaphat king of Judah. The story recounted in the 20th chapter of 2 Chronicles is eloquent as it describes the complete faith of Judah and Judah's king. "*Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Stand still, and see the salvation of your God.*" Judah was saved without the necessity of striking a single blow in their own defence. Perhaps some recollection of this story stirred in the mind of king Hezekiah as he went up to the Temple and spread Sennacherib's ultimatum before the Lord — because it was the Lord's business and He was quite able to defend His own people (Isa. chap. 37). Once again a right faith attitude triumphed and the city and people were saved, *because they believed.*

There is one very striking case of personal deliverance recorded in the Old Testament. It is that of Jonah. Whilst in a rebellious frame of mind, deliberately refusing to carry out the Divine commission, he became involved in what seemed to be the prelude to certain death. There was no apparent escape from his terrible plight. Deliverance came at length, but only *after* he had repented and cried to the Lord. Hear his own words "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple . . . I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2, 7-9).

*"And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon dry land."*

It is worthy of note that at times of dispensational changes in the development of the Divine Plan, there have been further instances of the fact that belief and faith are necessary to salvation. At the time of the Flood, when the "world that was" came to an end, deliverance was dependent upon this attitude of heart. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to a world of ungodly men (2 Pet. 2, 5). Quite evidently his message was not believed, there was no repentance and calling upon God, and the day of

opportunity passed. The return from the Babylonian captivity was marked by a similar call to repentance, heeded by the few and ignored by the many, and only those who believed undertook the journey and were delivered. "Thus saith the Lord, 'After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you . . . *then shalt ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you, and ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart . . . and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive*'" (Jer. 29, 10-14). The inference here is quite definite that restoration is conditional upon repentance, and Ezra 1, 5 and 3, 1 tell how sincere was the new found faith of the returned captives.

That return from Babylonian captivity was a great event in the chosen people's history—but there is a greater one yet to come, but still conditional upon the same requirement — prior conversion. Paul alludes to it when he says of Israel in the latter days "And they also, *if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again*" (Rom. 11, 23). As with the Church of this Gospel Age, so with that earthly people which will be gathered for God's service at the end of the Age, *God places a premium upon faith.* After all, this is but the principle expounded by Peter at Pentecost when he called upon his countrymen to "repent . . . and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out*" (Acts 3, 19) and by Paul when he said "*If thou shalt confess . . . and shalt believe . . . thou shalt be saved, for . . . with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (Rom. 10, 9-10).

This then is why Jesus declared "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3, 14-15). It was belief, faith, that enabled the dying Israelite in the wilderness to look up to the brazen serpent, held aloft in the sight of all men, and feel new life coursing through his veins as his gaze lighted upon that glittering symbol. So he that would taste of God's deliverance must first believe and "cry unto the Lord" in faith.

Perhaps this explains why Jesus could do no mighty work in His native district. The people there needed His ministrations just as much as in other parts. His desire and willingness to minister His healing power to them could not have been less than elsewhere. Yet we read "He could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6, 5-6). There is only one thing proof against the power of Jesus—

unbelief.

Unbelief—unbelief—unbelief. Forever standing as a barrier which must be broken down before there can be deliverance. Mankind in the next Age must believe before they can even make a start upon the way that leads to deliverance—for the mere fact of awakening from death is not deliverance at all; it is but a revivifying and a taking up of human experience at the point where it was left. So the mere gathering of a chosen people into the land of Promise at the Time of the End can achieve nothing in the plans of God unless that people be truly converted and devoted to Him, that in them and through them He may reveal His power to all nations. It was that kind of regathering surely that Jeremiah saw when he said "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31, 9). Zechariah speaks of a great mourning "in that day," as the "mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zech. 12, 9-11). This mourning of the End Time is over One slain, One Who was pierced, and is an indication of repentance and remorse, and an acceptance of the One Who had been rejected.

The Divine Law respecting this matter was laid down for all time when the Lord spoke with Moses on the Mount. Faithfully did the "meekest man in all the earth" transmit his Lord's words. The twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus tells plainly of the blessings that are contingent upon faith, blessings which include deliverance from enemies. It tells also of the woes that come as the result of unbelief,

woes that include captivity in the land of the enemy. All through that chapter no hint is given that deliverance can be secured on any other basis than prior faith.

At the first Advent Jewry demonstrated the opposite position. They stood in sore need of deliverance; they ardently desired deliverance; but they were still a faithless and unbelieving generation, and the deliverance they could have had passed them by. "How often," cried Jesus, "would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings — and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23, 28). "The days shall come," He said, "when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee . . . and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19, 43-44). That time of distress which closed the Jewish Age was a figure of the greater Time of Trouble which closes the Gospel Age. Just as those believers who formed the nucleus of the Christian Church were saved out of the destruction and captivity which befell Jerusalem and its people in A.D. 70, so the "people of faith" at this end of the Age will experience Divine deliverance from their trouble and stand forth revealed as the earthly people who are to carry Divine law to the nations. "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1, 21).

## An Ideal Climate

Scientists have defined the ideal climate as that in which it is possible for a lightly clothed man to walk at four miles an hour in sunshine without sweating, and to sit in sunshine, or stand or sit in shade or indoors, doing light work, without shivering. Experiments have shown that with relative humidity of 60 per cent. this requires a temperature of 66-68 degrees, and for a nude man, 70-71 degrees. ("Nature," 12th May, 1945). Markham, in "Climate and the Energy of Nations," points out that the 70 degree Isotherm (a line connecting those points on the earth's surface where the mean annual temperature is 70 degrees) passes through the sites of the ancient empires of Egypt, Palestine, Assyria, Sumeria, and Persia, and concludes therefore that these lands are capable of producing the best and most virile types of men.

This is of interest to those students of the Scriptures who expect the establishment of a nation,

located in some of those lands, through which the administration of the Kingdom of God upon earth is to be conducted. The Old Testament consistently proclaims Palestine to be a most desirable land, one "flowing with milk and honey," and it is noteworthy that the Divine promise to Abraham takes in the entire stretch of country from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates, and from the Arabian Desert to Lebanon, as the territory which is to be the headquarters for Divine government upon earth. That part of the world in which the human race probably originated and from which it spread outwards has evidently been endowed by Divine Providence with all the natural amenities to make it the most fitting source of the new life which will come to all nations in the time of Messiah's Kingdom. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2, 3).



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

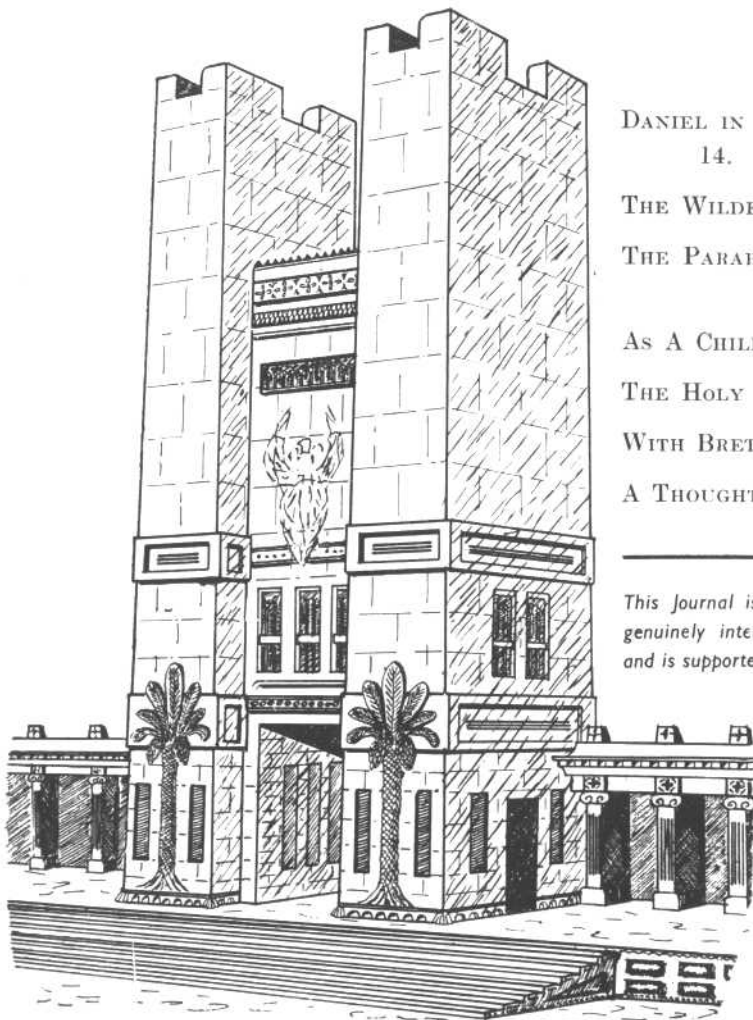
Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

### Between Ourselves

There will be found on page 116 of this issue a departure from the usual; an account of the recent visit to German Christian friends by a party of four, Bro. and Sis. H. E. Nadal and Bro. and Sis. T. W. Allen. The interest a goodly number of our readers have manifested, during past years, in these German brethren is our justification for printing this very full report and all such will rejoice to know that the severe hardships those brethren underwent during the early post-war years, hardships which evoked a very ready work of assistance in this country in which Bro. Nadal took the lead, have now been greatly mitigated. It is hoped that this report will be read with real interest.

\* \* \*

The visit of Bro. and Sis. Robert Hollister of U.S.A. to this country in 1956 will be still remembered, especially by those to whom Bro. Hollister's ministry was a welcome recollection of long-past happy Christian service. Bro. Hollister advises that he was so impressed by his experiences and observation whilst among the friends in this country that he is preparing a booklet entitled "Britain Re-visited after 45 years" in which he endeavours to set down some of the impressions he received whilst in this country. Needless to say those impressions will relate very closely to the things which lie closest to all our hearts, our walk before God and our progress in His Truth. It is Bro. Hollister's desire to present a copy of this booklet to anyone who is interested and would like to have it, with his sincere wish that it may be

a source of encouragement in the Christian way.

Friends in this country may write to the B.F.U. at 11 Lyncroft Gardens asking that a copy be sent them; all such requests will be listed and passed to Bro. Hollister. Friends in U.S.A. and Canada are desired to send their requests direct to:—

Mr. R. R. Hollister, Route 2, Waynesville,  
Ohio, U.S.A.

#### Gone from us

Bro. W. Crawford (*London*)  
Bro. F. Jowett (*Shotton*)  
Bro. R. McFarlane (*London*)  
Sis. Walton (*Bury*)

*"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."*

Pliny declares that Cicero once saw the *Iliad* of Homer written in so small a character that it could be contained in a nutshell. Peter Bales, a celebrated calligrapher, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, wrote the whole Bible so that it was shut up in a common walnut as its casket. In these days of advanced mechanism even greater marvels in miniature have been achieved, but never has so much meaning been compressed into so small a space as in that famous little word "So," in the text which tells us that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

## DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a  
great man's faith

### 14. The Seventy Weeks

The Persian conquest of Babylon actually made very little difference to the normal life of the city. The comparative ease with which the capital had fallen, with very little destruction or loss of life, meant that the citizens merely exchanged a Babylonian ruler for a Median one, to be succeeded after two years by a Persian, Cyrus. The commercial life of the city went on as usual; merchant vessels from Africa and India still came up the river to the quays of Babylon; caravans of goods still traversed the high roads from Syria and Egypt. The government was in the hands of the Persians, but the life of the nation went on much as before. It was not at the capture of Babylon by Cyrus that the vivid prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah relating to the doom of the wicked city had their fulfilment, but twenty years later, when Darius Hystaspes the Persian king laid siege again to the city and demolished its walls. In the meantime Daniel was faced with the situation that the power of Babylon was broken, apparently for ever; Cyrus the Persian was quite evidently the coming man, and in fact the real ruler behind Darius the Mede, and Cyrus was the name of the man in Isaiah's prophecy who should let go the captives and restore the worship of God at Jerusalem. Small wonder that Daniel went to the sacred books to discern what he could of the purposes of God.

*"In the first year of his reign (Darius) I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereby the words of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."* (ch. 9 vs 2.)

An old man of ninety sat reading, as he had read hundreds of times before, words that were penned when he was a lad of sixteen or so. His whole life through had been lived in the expectation of an event which, even as a boy, he knew could not come until he himself was ninety years of age; whatever may have been the hopes and beliefs of his fellows as to their deliverance, Daniel himself had known all along that he was destined to spend the whole of his life in Babylon. That Return from Exile which he so ardently desired for his people could not come until he himself

would be too old to share in it.

The third year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, was the year in which the Assyrian city Nineveh fell before the combined forces of Babylon and Media, and the empire of Assyria vanished for ever. In that same year Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, made Jehoiakim tributary, took the sacred vessels from the Temple and carried them, with Daniel and his fellows, into Babylon. In the following year the Babylonian king broke the power of Egypt at Carchemish and thenceforth was the undisputed master of Western Asia. In that year Jeremiah uttered the message against Judah which is recorded in his twenty-fifth chapter, and it is that message to which Daniel referred in his 9th chapter. The Divine sentence had gone forth against the guilty people; from that third year of Jehoiakim when they became tributary to Babylon and their Temple treasures went into an idol sanctuary, they were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jer. 25. 11). At the end of the seventy years the power of Babylon was to be broken. During the seventy years, all nations were to serve King Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his grandson, "until the very time of his land come" (Jer. 27. 7) a prophecy which was fulfilled in a most remarkable way, for his son Evil-Merodach (Jer. 52. 31) and his grandson Belshazzar both reigned and then the kingdom came to an end. Daniel, after the death of Belshazzar and the transfer of sovereignty to the Persians, realised that the time had expired. Only two years of the seventy remained, for the third year of Jehoiakim was in the year 606 B.C. Daniel's investigation into chronology was a very modest one, but he himself had been a lad at the beginning of the period; now he was still alive, an old man, at its end. He had first hand knowledge.

What were his thoughts as his eyes scanned the familiar words and his mind went back to those days of long ago? Was there a measure of sadness that so few of his own generation remained to share his realisation of hopes fulfilled? Daniel must have been getting a rather lonely man. His old friend and mentor,

Jeremiah, was of course long since gone to his rest, buried somewhere in Egypt. Of his three companions in exile, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, nothing is known since the incident of the fiery furnace, nearly forty-five years in the past. Quite likely they too were dead. Ezekiel the prophet and Jehoiachin the captive king were almost certainly at rest with their fathers. The up-and-coming young men who were marked out as leaders of the nation when the Return to Jerusalem could be effected were two generations later than his own—Zerubbabel the grandson of Jehoiachin and Joshua, the grandson of Seraiah, who had been High Priest of Israel when Daniel was a boy. But there was no jealousy and no repining. Daniel knew he could have no part in the stirring days of the Return himself, but he knew that prayer was vitally necessary before that Return could become a reality and so he betook himself to earnest and urgent prayer on behalf of his beloved people. And the consequence of that prayer was the revelation of a time prophecy so obviously and accurately fulfilled that it set the seal upon Daniel's book and stamped the study of time prophecy with Divine approval.

It is impossible to read that prayer in Daniel's ninth chapter without realising just how the saintly old man poured out his heart's longings to his God. Here are the hopes and dreams of a lifetime, the faith that knows God is faithful, the insight that perceives the only obstacle to be unbelief, the conviction that God will surely hear, and act, because He is God, and God cannot lie. What He has promised, that He will surely perform. Every acknowledgement of God's constancy and faithfulness is made, and with that a full and frank admission of Israel's guilt. There is no evasion of the issue; Israel reaped what he had sown; deserved what he had got. But because God is good, and because, with all their faults, Jerusalem and her people are called by God's name, Daniel besought his liege Lord to return, and relent, and execute His great purpose in delivering Jerusalem. "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies." Could any of us in these favoured days of spiritual understanding come more closely to the true nature of Divine forgiveness? Could any one of us come any nearer to the heart of the Father? It was to that last heartfelt appeal the Father responded. Once more a heavenly being of high rank and greatly honoured in the courts of heaven was

charged with a mission to earth. We know very little about conditions beyond the Veil, the everyday life of the celestial world, but that it is a place and condition of ceaseless activity is evident. Gabriel was no stranger to the world of man and he had visited Daniel before. If one asks the question whether there truly does exist an angelic personality bearing the name Gabriel, entrusted at times with Divine commissions to men, the answer can only be that the Bible gives us no ground for disputing the fact. This "seventy weeks" prophecy could only have been revealed from heaven; Daniel asserts that it was told him by a visitor he knew from former experience to be Gabriel, the messenger of God. Five hundred years later the same personality appeared to Mary the mother of Jesus, again with a message of great import, this time to announce the fulfilment of that which he had predicted to Daniel five hundred years previously. Although Gabriel is not mentioned by name anywhere else in Bible history, it is very possible that he is the one concerned in other appearances of an angelic being to men—to the Apostle Peter in prison, perhaps, or to Paul when he was told he would be brought before Caesar.

"Whiles I was speaking in prayer", Gabriel came. "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to show thee" is the assurance of the heavenly visitor. So quickly may prayer be answered; so near to us is that celestial world where God's will is done as one day it will be done on earth. "Before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear" says the Lord through the prophet Isaiah. Sin is a separating influence which puts God far away from us; prayer is a magnetism which brings us at once very near to God.

So the story of the seventy weeks was unfolded. "Weeks" is, as is usually well known, a mistranslation. The proper rendering is "seventy sevens" where "seven" is "hepdomad," a unit, especially a unit of time. There is not much doubt that Daniel was to have his understanding of Jeremiah's seventy years linked up with a greater seventy.—seventy sevens, in fact—leading up to the greater development of God's Plan, which would, eventually, bring to full fruition all Daniel's hopes.

The seventy years of Jeremiah were literally fulfilled, several times over. The primary decree was that not only Judah, but the nations round about, were to serve the king

of Babylon seventy years and then the power of Babylon would be broken. (Jer. 25. 11-12.). During that period the penalty for resistance to the Divine decree of subjection was to be conquest, destruction, desolation. True to the promise, from the third year of Jehoiakim when Judah passed under Babylonian domination (B.C. 606) to the Decree of Cyrus (B.C. 536) was seventy years. Likewise the period from the destruction of the Temple in the eleventh year of Zedekiah to the completion of Zerubbabel's Temple in the sixth year of Darius Hystaspes was seventy years. Small wonder that Daniel, having lived through the first-named period, looked now for the restoration of Judah, and hence the need for Divine enlightenment as to the next development in the outworking of the Divine Plan.

*"Seventy sevens are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city"* (ch. 9 vs 24) to accomplish a number of things associated with that outworking—in fact, seven different aspects of our Lord's work at His First Advent. Gabriel recited them in order; and while he recited, Daniel must have listened in growing awe as he realised that greater and still un-plumbed depths of the Divine purposes were being revealed to his mind.

*"To finish the transgression."* Our Lord's Advent was timed to come when Israel had "filled up the measure of their fathers." (Matt. 23. 32.). The period between Daniel and Jesus brought Israel's guilt up to the brim and abundantly demonstrated their unworthiness of the promise.

*"To make an end of sins."* Jesus did that by yielding his own life an offering for sin, a Ransom for All, to be testified in due time. (Isa. 53. 10. I Tim. 2. 5-6.).

*"To make reconciliation for iniquity."* This is the atonement which Christ made, pictured in the Tabernacle ceremonies by the offering the blood of the sin-offering on the "mercy seat" or propitiatory in the inner sanctuary, a "covering" for human sin.

*"To bring in everlasting righteousness."* The Apostle Paul explained this when he spoke of justification by faith, the gift of God to all who accept Jesus as Saviour and trust in Him alone for salvation and reconciliation with God.

*"To seal up the vision and prophecy."* The more correct rendering is "vision and prophet" and the sealing is in the sense of ratifying. The Father Himself ratified both the vision and the prophet who brought the vision, when He declared from Heaven at the

time of Jesus' baptism "This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him."

*"To anoint the Most Holy."* The most holy in this sentence refers to the consecrated things of the temple, especially the altar of burnt-offerings, and can well apply here to the final work of the First Advent when Jesus glorified, anointed His disciples with the Holy Spirit of Power, sending them forth after Pentecost to commence their great work of witness.

Gabriel went on to tell Daniel (vs 25-27) that this great period of seventy sevens was to be divided into three sections of seven sevens, sixty-two sevens and one final seven. In that last seven great happenings were to transpire. Most momentous of all, Messiah would be cut off "but not for himself." No, He died for others, for men, that they might live. In the middle of that "seven" Messiah would bring to an end the "sacrifice and oblation," those literal offerings and sacrifices demanded by the law to give Israel a ritualistic righteousness. He made an end of that Law, nailing it to His cross. Never again after that could those offerings have any validity in God's sight, for the reality has come. Then Messiah was also to "confirm the covenant with many for one seven." True to that word, the covenant of favour to Israel which precluded Gentiles from entering the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" was continued throughout three and a half years more until it came to an end with the acceptance of Cornelius into the Church, the first Gentile fellow-heir. Because of "the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate" even as Jesus declared, weeping over the city but declaring nevertheless "your house is left unto you desolate." Then, finally, "the people of the prince that should come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" and that word was finally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Here is a clear outline of the light and shade, the glory and the tragedy, of the First Advent. Daniel must have perceived that all this meant great distress for his people even though it also included the fulfilment at last of the Divine promise. Naturally enough, therefore, the question must have come to his lips as it did to the disciples of Jesus half a millennium later, "How long?" "When shall these things be?"

Daniel realised at once that the seventy sevens were sevens of years. He was already aware of Jeremiah's period of seventy years,

now fulfilled, but this was a greater period, *seventy sevens*. Four hundred and ninety years; that was the vista which now appeared before the prophet's wondering mind.

Gabriel gave the starting-point. "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem . . ." (vs 25). Daniel did not live to see that starting-point. He did hear the decree of Cyrus in B.C. 536 which commissioned the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple. He probably never knew of the decline in enthusiasm which followed, the cessation of Temple building by royal command after six years, the restoration ten years later still, in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, in consequence of the missionary zeal of Haggai and Zechariah. He slept peacefully in the grave on that great day when after four more years, the completed Temple was dedicated. But still the city was broken down and its walls destroyed and its gates burned with fire. No permission or decree had yet been given to restore and build Jerusalem and the new Temple stood in the midst of a half ruined city, the people dwelling mainly in temporary houses or else right outside the city precincts. Came the reign of King Xerxes and his Jewish queen Esther, and then his successor Artaxerxes, who in the seventh year of his reign, nearly seventy years after the restoration in the days of Cyrus, sent Ezra the priest to govern the little Jewish colony which surrounded the Temple and tilled the fields of Judea—but still no word of building the city.

At last, thirteen years beyond Ezra's first mission and eighty-one years after the first return, Nehemiah the King's cup-bearer, oppressed by his knowledge of the city's continued desolation, obtained from King Artaxerxes the long awaited decree. The Book of Nehemiah tells the story; for the first time royal permission was given to build the walls, to set up the gates, to build the houses, to restore Jerusalem the desolate city. The twentieth year of the reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes, as far as can be deduced, the year B.C. 455, was the starting point of Gabriel's prophecy.

The beginning of the seventieth seven, four hundred and eighty-three years from B.C. 455, coincides with A.D. 29, the year of Jesus' baptism in Jordan and the commencement of his ministry. Sixty-nine weeks to "Messiah the Prince", said Gabriel; our Lord became "Messiah the Prince" at Jordan when He entered upon His ministry. "In the midst of

the seven", three and a half years later, he caused "the sacrifice and oblation to cease," and three and a half years later still, in A.D. 36, the covenant that had been confirmed with many for "one seven"—the seventieth—came to an end and the Gentiles became fellow-heirs in the call to joint-heirship with Christ.

As we look back upon this fulfilled prophecy we can only marvel at its exactitude. Small wonder that the modern critics decry the whole thing and endeavour to suggest other and earlier starting points for the prophecy so as to bring its termination in the days of the Maccabean revolt, assigning all these eloquent phrases to the petty doings of a lot of apostate High Priests and princes in Israel. We can only say "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The division, in verse 25, of the sixty-nine weeks into two periods of seven and sixty-two is not easy to understand, for seven sevens (forty nine years) from the decree of Artaxerxes end in B.C. 406. Neither Scripture nor secular history pinpoints any outstanding event for that year, and Gabriel, likewise, gives no indication of what to expect. This year was within one year of the death of Darius Nothus, the son of Artaxerxes, and with his death the toleration with which the Persian rulers treated the Jews began to harden into that antagonism which developed later into the terrible persecutions of the Greek rulers after Alexander. Internal deductions from the Old Testament seem to indicate that Nehemiah himself died at just about this time and that Malachi, the last of the prophets, also prophesied just then. It may be that the first period of seven sevens was intended to mark the passing of the last generation—Nehemiah's—associated with the return from the Captivity and the close of the Old Testament. We cannot be sure, but it seems a reasonable deduction.

And now the sands of Daniel's life were fast running out. Not much more, and he passes from the scene of his earthly labours.

(To be continued)

### A REMINDER OF JONAH

"Royal Engineers wearing gas masks melted down a dead whale, washed ashore on Cyprus, by lighting fires round it. Attempts to blow it up had failed." (Daily Press, 17th May, 1957).

Just an incidental proof that there are whales in the Eastern Mediterranean, where Jonah experienced his memorable adventure.

They are a rarity nowadays, but the Roman naturalist Pliny, soon after the First Advent, declared that they were plentiful in his own time. The Old Testament does not say specifically that the creature which saved Jonah from death was actually a whale, but our own

booklet "*The Mission of Jonah*" marshals evidence to show that it was in fact a whale, which was eventually stranded on the sandy shore of Palestine just as this one was stranded on Cyprus.

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## THE WILDERNESS TEMPTATION

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A story  
of Jesus

*"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."*

The baptism of Jesus was not the result of a sudden decision. He came to Jordan with His mind already set on the mission before Him. He had for many years been studying the Old Testament Scriptures, perceiving ever more and more clearly what His life-work was to be. He came to John at just the right time, when he was thirty years old and therefore "of age" under the Jewish law. The same Holy Spirit of God that had supervised and guided His every action since childhood had opened His mind to the meaning of the Scriptures, and drawn Him to Bethabara where John was baptising, and now, that step taken, was leading Him—Mark says *driving* Him—to the next phase of His experience, the sober consideration of how and in what way He was to carry out His mission of saving the world. It was inevitable that the temptations should come, and in the very nature of things that they should come right at the beginning of His ministry, when, conscious of His Divine power, He would very quickly realise the possibilities.

*"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred".*

He had gone into the wilderness "in the spirit"—a condition of mind something like that of John the Revelator, when he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1. 10) or of Ezekiel when the Spirit lifted him up by the river of Chebar, and he saw visions of God (Ezek. 7. 3). In such a condition of mind Jesus would be more than usually insensible to His surroundings and His bodily needs. His mind, fully occupied during those forty days and nights with the prospect before Him, going over all the details of the mission He was setting out to accomplish, would give but little heed to the claims of the body. It is not likely that He ate nothing at all during that time, but that He spared time from His rapt condition of mind only to take the barest

sustenance, so when at last He began again to become conscious of His environment the claims of hunger asserted themselves.

*"And when the tempter came to him."*

Here is one very definite instance where the personality of the Devil is clearly implied. It is fashionable nowadays to dismiss belief in the personal Devil, the implacable enemy of God and man, as an worn-out idea, and to conclude that the principle of evil, in active operation, is all that is implied by the Scriptural references to Satan. But in this story of the temptations the whole idea conveyed is that of a personal being with whom our Lord held converse. This was certainly the general belief in our Lord's own day. The Book of Wisdom, which was written within fifty years of the time of Christ, is an accurate reflection of Jewish thought at the time of the First Advent and in Wisdom 2. 24 it is indicated that the devil (*diabolos*) is the one through whom death came into the world at the beginning, as related in the third chapter of Genesis. It is important also to remember that the story as we have it must have come from our Lord's own lips, for no human being was witness of His temptation. He was alone in the wilderness, and that which passed between Jesus the Son of God and Lucifer the rebellious archangel was overheard by no man. Therefore Jesus must have told these things to his disciples in later days; and there is an interesting fragment in the so-called "Gospel of the Ebionites" which asserts this much: "The Lord told us that for forty days the Devil spoke with Him and tempted Him."

It might be said, of course, that the account could have been given to the Evangelists by direct inspiration, but in that case the accounts would surely have been in the same order. That they differ as much as they do points to their having been written from the recollections of the disciples as to what Jesus did say actually to them, even although without doubt they were guided in their writing

by the Holy Spirit.

We can picture Jesus, sitting with His disciples on a grassy bank, or walking with them through the fields, suddenly making some allusion to that time which was the preface to His ministry, and telling them of the insidious suggestions that came into His mind, and the replies with which He countered them, when for forty days and forty nights He was alone with Satan.

This temptation of Jesus is the preface to His life and work, just as the temptation of the first Adam was the preface to the life and work of man. The first Adam failed under temptation; the second triumphed. There is a striking analogy between the first and second temptations. The tree of Gen. 3. 6 was good for food; in Matt. 4 Jesus is invited to make the stones into bread. The tree was pleasant to the eyes; Jesus is urged to create a magnificent spectacle by casting Himself down from the Temple. The tree was "greatly to be desired to make one wise"; all the power, wealth, and honour of this world is offered to our Lord.

Mark puts in a detail which has escaped the other Evangelists. He says that Jesus "was with the wild beasts". A strange phrase; and connected with it perhaps is the old Christian tradition that when Jesus spent those forty days in the wilderness all the wild beasts of the world came before Him to pay homage. Perhaps there is a profound truth behind the tradition and behind Mark's statement. Perfect man possessed powers of control over the lower creation which were lost at the Fall. Jesus must have possessed those powers and doubtless exercised them in the wilderness. Leopards, wolves, hyenas and jackals infested that same wilderness in the Lord's day, and there may even have been an occasional lion, for they were plentiful there in earlier days. Wolves have been shot there even within this present century. The Lord may well have told His disciples of His exercise of such power and Mark records the bare kernel of what He said.

*"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."*

Not that Jesus might allay His hunger; the suggestion was more subtle than that. It was nothing less than that He use His powers to satisfy the material needs of men there and then. Jesus had come that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Here was a short cut to that glorious fulness of human life to which Jesus intends

eventually to draw "whosoever will." Why not do that at once, without waiting for the much longer outworking of the Divine Plan. It would be so easy to transform the economic system of the country, to drive out the Roman soldiers and the tax-gatherers and all those who fattened upon the misery of the people, to make the barren land fruitful and productive, and the vineyards and olivegroves yield tenfold their former fruitage. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." It would be so easy to bring about literal fulfilment of those old prophecies, and to bring in the Times of the Restitution at once, instead of waiting God's own time.

But it would have deprived man of needed experience, and it would have deprived God of that "people for His Name" to the calling and selection of which this Gospel Age is being devoted. There would have been no eternal Church in the heavens, and no reconciled human race on earth, for death would still continue even though man's lot had been immeasurably improved. Jesus knew that the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, and He knew too that there could be only one possible answer to the suggestion. *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'"*

*"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down'; for it is written 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee. . . .'"*

This "pinnacle of the temple" was probably the parapet of the portico of Herod, overlooking the valley of Jehoshaphat seven hundred feet below. It was not literally, but spiritually, that Jesus stood on that parapet and heard the insidious voice suggesting that by some such spectacular feat He could attract the notice of all men to His mission. Perhaps He remembered the tradition, current in His own day amongst the Jews, that the Messiah would appear suddenly from Heaven descending upon the crowd of worshippers in the Temple court, in much the same fashion that many Christians in our own day look for Him at His Second Advent literally and visibly descending from the skies with an audible shout, failing to realise that the Lord is now a spiritual being, invisible to human sight and that His Advent must be appreciated by evidences other than those of the natural

eyesight and hearing.

But there was more in the temptation than that. Judas in later days was beset by the same temptation, and fell under it. Jesus, standing in spirit on the pinnacle of the temple, realised all that the sacred edifice stood for to the patriotic Jew. Two parties at least, the Pharisees and the Zealots, longed desperately for the day when the alien usurper would be driven out from Judah's land and the people of God enter into their inheritance again. To all such the Temple became the symbol of their hopes and their cause. Jesus must have thought how easy it would be to assume the headship of those political parties and from the pinnacle of that power gather every element in the country to a swift descent upon the Roman authority, driving it far beyond the boundaries of Judea and establishing the mountain of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains.

But that would be setting up the Kingdom of love and peace by means of the sword, and Jesus knew that "they that take the sword must perish with the sword." Hezekiah the Zealot had tried it, and failed. His son Judas the Galilean nearly won through, but he failed. In the year A.D. 70 the entire nation, driven to desperation, tried again, and failed so utterly that they lost all, and were scattered among the nations. Jesus turned away from the alluring prospect, knowing that this

was not the way of God.

*"The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him, 'All these things I will give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.'"*

Luke says that the Devil showed him all these kingdoms and their glory "in a moment of time". John Bunyan's scornful comment on that observation was "it did not take the devil long to show all that he had". As Jesus thought of the great panoply of human might represented in the kingdoms of this world, He might well have pondered on the manner in which He himself would eventually succeed to the throne of the world. Instead of confining His mission and work to the land and people of Israel, why not reach out to the lands beyond, to Egypt and Greece, and to Parthia, Rome's great rival in the East. Why not wrest the rule of Rome itself from the feeble fingers of the ageing Tiberius Caesar, and from that great city rule in righteousness. Jesus rejected the short cut, the easy way, the course that could lead only to temporary alleviation of human misery and none at all of human sin, and re-affirmed his determination to follow, at all costs, the pathway marked out for Him by His Father. He answered all the suggestions with "It is written", and the Devil, baffled, left him for a season.

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## **THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN**

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*"A certain man went down to Jericho, and fell among thieves . . ." (Luke 10. 30).*

The simple story stirs the emotions. The lawyer's verdict, given in response to Jesus' question, has been endorsed by countless voices throughout this age, so much so that the unknown benefactor has become the symbol of neighbourliness and disinterested kindness. Often is the phrase "good Samaritan" used by people who have no idea of its origin. Proof positive is this that deep down in every human heart there lies consciousness that the attitude taken by that traveller on the Jericho road represents the true duty of man.

Who is my neighbour? The story was given that the answer to that question might be thrown out in bold relief. It is the natural

question of any man who wants to serve God in God's own way. It is a tacit admission that there is a "fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man" which ought to influence and guide all human relationships and actions. And this is a right feeling. The plans of God provide for a world in which all men are brothers and each willingly takes upon himself the responsibility of his brethren's welfare. The work of the Millennial Age is to lead men to this appreciation, and it will only be as a man comes willingly and intelligently into harmony with such attitude of mind that the old process of sin, working in his members, will be destroyed and he receive new, and everlasting, life.

In that day two principles of the Divine Plan will be brought to light and will be

written in the hearts of men who respond to the "gospel preaching" of that Age. Both of these principles have been enunciated by the Apostle Paul. Speaking to the Athenians, he said of God "*In him we live, and move, and have our being*" and writing to the Christians at Rome he declared "no man liveth to himself". Both these principles have been rejected by men to-day, and the measure of that rejection, both in the affairs of nations and the lives of individuals, is revealed by the chaotic state into which the world has fallen. Not until men live *in God and for each other* will they find the peace, the security and the happiness which is so persistently sought, and so vainly sought, to-day. The attainment of those blessings demands the payment of a price, and that price is assessed in terms of service for one's fellow-men, and no one will find the rest for which his soul longs until he has come to that knowledge and paid that price.

If this is true of the world of mankind in the next Age, the Age which is characterised by God's personal intervention in human affairs, it must also be true of this present Age in so far as the followers of Christ's teachings are concerned. Each one whose life is given to the Lord Christ in consecration is vitally concerned with the principles underlying the story of the good Samaritan.

Jesus was suddenly confronted with a "lawyer". We must not take the term to mean that this man was a kind of First Century practising solicitor or barrister, such as would be indicated by our present usage of the word "lawyer". It means that he held the position of a "Doctor of the Law", an ecclesiastical distinction which placed him upon a higher level even than that of a Rabbi, and implied that he was qualified to pronounce with authority on matters concerning the laws of God. We are apt also to draw the wrong inference from the statement that he stood up and "tempted" Jesus unless we remember that this word in the New Testament has the significance of "proving" or "testing". It is very clear that this man came forward with the express intention of putting the principles of Christ's teaching to the proof, or as we would say, applying the "acid test", of Mosaic Law, to these new and revolutionary tenets which were being advocated by the prophet of Nazareth.

The lawyer may or may not have been sincere in his interrogation; the narrative does not make that aspect of the matter very

clear, but the fact that his further questions showed him to be a man amenable to reasonable argument may justify us in concluding that his attitude was that of an ordinarily honest and sincere man who had been brought up and indoctrinated in the elements of Mosaic law until that law had become the background of his mental processes. This new teaching, perhaps, intrigued and interested him; he was not at all sure how it would work out in practice but if it could be shown as a logical development of the Mosaic code then he would be prepared to give it further consideration.

And Jesus shattered this whole meticulous intellectualism by returning an answer that compelled the lawyer to admit ignorance of one of the principal features of that law with which he, with others, imagined himself to be expertly familiar. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind*", said Jesus, "*and thy neighbour as thyself.*" A most familiar passage and one that this Doctor of the Law must have expounded to others times without number. But under the keen gaze of those searching eyes he was compelled to admit his lack of real knowledge. He had to assent to the truth of the answer; he had had his own law, the code in which he trusted, quoted to him; and yet he still had not the enlightenment he sought. With his mind still bemused by the tortuous arguments with which his training had made him familiar, he tried to steer the conversation into the more familiar channels of debate, and "*willing to justify himself*", anxious to hold the advantage in argument with this unlearned Nazarene, put the supplementary question in appropriate form for argument. "Who is my neighbour?" he asked.

Jesus answered that question by telling a story. To what extent the lawyer benefited by this unorthodox method of teaching truth we do not know; certain it is that many of the bystanders, men and women in humbler walks of life, must have gained enlightenment and inspiration thereby. "*Truth, embodied in a tale, may enter in at lowly doors*", wrote Tennyson, and the profound wisdom of that remark is well worthy of serious consideration by those whose privilege and responsibility it is to teach Divine truth.

A certain man went down to Jericho. On the lonely mountainous road which has only recently lost its dangers he was set upon by robbers who, from behind the rocky crags

towering high above the winding track, descended silently upon him, robbed him of his possessions and clothes, beat him savagely into unconsciousness, and departed leaving him to die. Travellers were few and far between, and quite possibly before the next one came that way the vultures would have had their feast. But it was not so to be this time. By chance, said Jesus, while his listeners sat enthralled, there came a certain priest that way, who, when he saw him, passed by on the other side. The lawyer must have shifted uneasily at this. He was not himself a priest but his interests and theirs lay in the same direction and he was not certain just how far the implied rebuke was going to point to his own self. But he could not but listen as Jesus continued; and Jesus must have put much more detail into the story than is preserved for us in the Gospel narrative. The priest would of course justify himself in his action. The man was probably dead, and he, a priest, must not defile himself by touching a dead body. His consecration to God required that he keep himself ceremonially clean for the Divine service. And perhaps this man had committed some crime for which this was God's retribution, and he must beware lest by relieving the man's distress he be found to fight against God. So he might have reasoned, as he hurried on his way, casting furtive glances at the beetling crags above him and trusting that the robbers were by now well away from the vicinity.

Not long, perhaps, after the figure of the priest had disappeared in the distance fresh footsteps sounded on the road. Another traveller appeared, proclaiming himself by his dress to be a Levite, a man devoted to the service of God just as was the priest, but in matters which in everyday life did bring him into closer contact with ordinary people. He might quite possibly have been possessed of some degree of medical skill, for that was a not uncommon function of the Levites, and in any case his daily duties would have certainly given him many opportunities of relieving human suffering. At any rate, he did cross over the road and look at the injured man, looking down upon him. Here was clearly a case within his own province. The man was a son of Israel, he was afflicted and in distress, and the Levites' traditional duty was to succour and assist the people, among whom they were to have their dwelling and from whom they were to draw their sustenance. His first impulse might have been to render first aid

and do something to set the injured man on his journey again, but even if so, other and more selfish counsels came into his mind. The robbers might still be about and the longer he stayed in that place the greater was the risk of becoming another victim. His efforts to help the unfortunate traveller would be quite useless in that case. Moreover he had a duty to his own people not to bring himself into a position where he might be rendered physically incapable of serving them on his return home; this man might be an Israelite, and in distress, but he was not of the Levite's own parish, and "charity begins at home". After all, the man should have taken precautions against robbery if he intended travelling with possessions in such a notorious place; he should have waited until he could join a company of travellers. A Levite whose profession forbade him to accumulate property could hardly be expected to defend the rights of property in others and the man had really only got what he deserved. So he might have thought, unctuously, as he left the unconscious man, with a couple of backward glance, and went his way.

We can be quite sure that the world has never known a better story-teller than Jesus of Nazareth. His listeners must have seen, quite plainly, that desolate road, the unfortunate traveller lying outstretched by the wayside, the pitiless heat of noonday pouring down on the sun-baked rocks, the still air hanging lifeless and heavy, and high up in the blue sky, a pair of vultures hovering, waiting their time . . . and then, sharply, breaking the stillness, the "clip-clop" of a donkey picking its way among the stones of the road.

The vultures disappeared; the donkey and his rider came into sight. The newcomer betrayed, by the cast of his features, his non-Jewish blood. He was a Samaritan, a member of that mongrel race which had descended from the Assyrians and Babylonians with which Samaria had been colonised in the days of Sennacherib, the apostate Israelites, the Phoenicians and the Canaanites who had occupied the land during the time of the great captivities. As Jesus came to this part of His story, more than one of His listeners turned and spat on the ground in disgust at mention of the hated name; but they turned back to listen again.

The stranger took in the situation at a glance. Without hesitation he stopped his beast, alighted and went across to the injured man. With a dexterity that betrayed complete

familiarity with this kind of thing and revealed that he must have acted thus before, he bound up the man's wounds, pouring in oil and wine, set him upon his own beast, and, supporting him thus as he himself walked beside the donkey, took him to the *khan*, the wayside rest-house halfway between Jerusalem and Jericho. There his interest might well have ended; the man would be safe, and would recover in a few days, and could reasonably be expected to arrange for his own welfare; but no, the Samaritan produced money from his own pocket—the “two pence” were two *denarii*, adequate for several days board and lodging—and gave assurance that he would be responsible for whatever further expenditure was necessary to restore the man to health. And he was not one of the Lord's chosen people! He was not a member of the consecrated nation! He was a man of the world, a Samaritan!

*And this man, says Jesus, is the man that has kept the commandments and is worthy of eternal life.* We miss the whole point of the story if we take it as merely a commendation of the man who does do good works. It is nothing of the kind. The lawyer wanted to know what he must do to gain eternal life; what was the commandment that really mattered; what obligation did this new teaching that Jesus brought propose to lay upon man. The story was the reply, and the lawyer readily saw, as Jesus meant him to see, that the Samaritan was the one who had rightly interpreted every man's duty to his fellow-men and to his God. The men whom Jesus wanted for followers and disciples were to be as this Samaritan—prepared to demonstrate their essential harmony with God Who “so loved the world that He gave” by rendering such service as they are able to a world in distress, instead of, like the Priest and the Levite, making excuse of their spiritual mission and calling to avert their heads and pass by on the other side. The Samaritan did not stay with the man; having done what he could, he proceeded upon his own business, but he had notwithstanding challenged, and overcome, the powers of evil in the world by working some positive good.

This is the issue before us, the consecrated of to-day. It is so fatally easy to close our eyes to human distress and take refuge behind the knowledge that God has provided the Kingdom work of the Millennial Age to “wipe away tears from off all faces”. We know quite certainly that in no event shall we be able to

effect any substantial improvement in the world's affairs, and that time and energy spent in the endeavour is worse than wasted. The Scriptures are definite, and so, too, are the signs of the times, that this world is incapable of self-reformation and that its only hope lies in the coming—and the speedy coming—of that Kingdom whose interests we serve and to whose Ruler we are consecrated. But when we have admitted and said all this, there remains the fact, the solid, inescapable fact, that Jesus tells us plainly it was the Samaritan, and not the Priest, who was the true son of God. And we as Christians have to find the way, as the Samaritan found the way, of continuing the work our Lord did on earth, by “doing good to all men as we have opportunity”, interweaving this with our supreme mission of undergoing training and preparation both by study and experience for our future commission of world conversion in the days of the Kingdom.

The Samaritan was able to render this good deed and still go about his business. We can do the same, and in the effort find that our sympathetic outlook upon human distress, our closer contact with the infirmities and failings and sorrows of suffering humanity, will of itself shape our characters surely and definitely into the likeness that God desires for us. And this is something which each of the consecrated can do. It is not given to all to expound from the platform, to speak with ready tongue to those who as yet “know not God”, to spread abroad the knowledge of the Divine Plan. It is possible for each of us to perform little deeds of kindness, unselfish acts, to be known as one who, being a Christian, interprets that Christianity as did its Founder, in “going about doing good”, and so bring glory to His Name more certainly and more wholeheartedly than any amount of platform intellectualism can do.

The “Inn of the Good Samaritan” is still there, on that road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Travellers still stop there in passing, and perchance stay for the night. Scholars say that there is every reason for thinking that the present inn stands on the site of the one that existed in the time of our Lord, and that that inn must have been well known to the men and women who listened to His story. *The inn is still there*; is it a witness and a reminder? There is no sepulchre of Jesus with marbled or crystal coffin containing His remains to which people may make pilgrimage, and before which they can adore. The

Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem almost certainly is not the true site of the garden tomb. Jesus our Lord desires no empty homage of that nature. But the Inn of the Good Samaritan is still there, a building and a courtyard upon which men may gaze, and, gazing, remember the story of old that enshrined the whole teaching of Jesus regarding the duty of His disciples to their fellow men. *"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me."*

That is the law of the Millennial Age, as we know full well from our understanding of the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. It is no less true to-day. We, now, must needs practice that principle in our lives if we are to urge it upon men in the coming Age. We must be able to tell men, in that day, that we did put it into operation now, and, having done so, did find that, even as Jesus said, *this* is the answer to the question "Which is the first and great commandment".

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## **THE CHILD SHALL DIE AN HUNDRED YEARS OLD**

An Examination of Isaiah 65. 20

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*"There shall no more be thence an infant of days,  
Nor an old man that hath not filled his days;  
For the child shall die an hundred years old;  
But the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed."*

The first two clauses are comparatively easy to understand; there will be no untoward deaths of infants at early ages—the meaning of the expression "an infant of days" being that of one whose life is quickly cut short—neither will there be old men who are, as it were, ready for death but death has not yet claimed them. The present indiscriminate coming of death to all sections of the community will no longer continue; in that day the only cause of death will be wilful and incorrigible sin. The next clause "*for the child shall die an hundred years old*" is more difficult. The word for "child" is *naar*, which indicates a male of any age from infancy to youthful maturity. Thus the child Moses in the water (Exod. 2. 6) is *naar*; so is Absalom in his prime (2 Sam. 18. 29), Joshua when he became Moses' lieutenant at the Exodus (Exod. 33. 11), and the four hundred Amalekite warriors who fled from David on their camels (1 Sam. 30. 17). The same word in its feminine form (*naarah*) is used for "young woman" as for Ruth in Ruth 4. 12. Remembering that Job, speaking of the Millennial Day, said of the wasted and aged man "*His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth*" (Job. 33. 25) we might conclude that this third clause of the verse refers to those who are in the ideal state of human maturity, neither "infant" or "old man", a

state which will be the normal physical condition of men in that day. This still does not explain why such should "die an hundred years old", i.e. in the full bloom of maturity, and this leads one to suspect a faulty translation due perhaps to some very early corruption in the Hebrew text. This suspicion is confirmed when one refers to the Septuagint rendering of the verse, which is as follows:

*"Neither shall there be any more a child that dies untimely, or an old man who shall not complete his time: for the youth shall be an hundred years old, and the sinner who dies at an hundred years old shall also be accursed."*

This seems to teach more clearly that there will be no *untimely* deaths in the Millennium, or as we would say, no "natural" deaths, and that an age of a hundred years, which to-day is accounted extreme old age and accompanied as a rule by infirmity and decrepitude, will then be considered as that of a youth. But there will be death to sinners, and the sinner who dies at a hundred years will be cut off for ever.

Further confirmation of this view comes from a book which is thought to have been written about a hundred and twenty years before Christ, the "*Book of Jubilees*". Written by some pious Jew and based upon the Old Testament Scriptures, it contains one passage which is evidently taken from Isa. 65. 20, and since the writer probably had access to a more accurate copy of Isaiah's prophecy than we possess to-day his interpretation is valuable. In describing the Millennial reign, he says:

*"And in those days the children will begin to study the laws, and to seek the command-*

ments, and return to the path of righteousness. And the days will begin to grow many and increase among the children of men, until their days draw near to one thousand years. . . . *And there will be no old man, nor one who is not satisfied with his days; for all will be as children and youths.* And all their days they will complete and live in peace and joy, and there will be no Satan nor any evil destroyer; for all their days will be days of blessing and healing." (Jub. 23. 26-29).

Again there is the picture of youthful perfection for all men, and everlasting life for the righteous. Whether the hundred years for the span of the wicked is intended literally or merely as the symbolic measure of a life that is governed by sin in contrast with the

"thousand years" of the righteous is perhaps a debatable point. There may be some link with the words of Solomon "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet know I that it shall be well with them that fear God" (Eccl. 8. 12). It may be that the meaning of this last clause is "the sinner, even though he live a hundred years; even though his life seem to be prolonged beyond the span that to-day is usual with man, *yet* he will eventually suffer sin's penalty and be accursed (cut-off)". God is not mocked: what a man soweth, that shall he reap, and if, under the enlightening influences of that blessed day, a man persists in the way of sin, he will certainly reap sin's penalty—death.

## THE HOLY CITY

A glance at  
Rev. 22

The vision of the new Jerusalem, the account of which concludes the Book of Revelation and the Bible, is a symbolic representation of the final phase, the consummation, of the Divine Plan. John saw a wonderful city descending out of the heavens to settle everlastingly upon the new earth created by God to take the place of that old earth which had passed away. This city was to become the dwelling-place of God, where He would dwell with men, and into it there should nothing defiling ever enter; only those that were accounted worthy of everlasting life. From the city there flowed a "River of Life", having "Trees of Life" growing upon its banks, and from this water and food of life the sin-sick nations of the world were to derive sustenance and healing. The vision closes with a gracious invitation to all men, that they come and partake of the water of life freely.

This is not a vision of Heaven, as so many have supposed. Its essential basis is the coming of Divine government to earth and the presence of God to be with men. It foreshadows the restoration of Edenic conditions upon earth, for the connection of this River and these Trees of Life with the Genesis story is too plain to be ignored. It pictures the time when this rebellious earth has become fully reconciled to God and, to use Paul's words in Rom. 8. 21 "The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The Church of Christ has already (in the 20th

chapter) been exalted to Heaven and eternal association with Christ the Lord; the 21st and 22nd chapters tell of the corresponding completion of the Divine Plan for the earth, a completion which is to be effected during the Millennial Age.

John's introductory synopsis of the vision (chap. 21. 1-8) records the words he heard from heaven "*Behold the tabernacle (dwelling place) 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*". It is sometimes suggested that this chapter records two separate descents of the Holy City to earth; this is not likely. It is more probable that John prefaced his account of the actual vision with a short summary and then in verse 9 addressed himself to the vision in detail.

The city as it appeared to John was square in outline, surrounded by a high wall of gleaming green jasper, the golden buildings set in terraces, one above another so that at the centre its height appeared to be as great as the width. This square form symbolised the justice and righteousness of the new Divine government, and its intimate connection with the heavenly powers was shown by its towering up to the skies. The wall rested upon twelve foundations bearing the names of the

apostles, and at each of the twelve lofty gateways there was posted a guardian angel. The number twelve had particular significance to the ancients, for they pictured the sun as issuing forth from twelve successive portals in the heavens in turn, as month succeeded month, and this, with the division of the day into twelve hours, invested the number with the idea of earthly or material completeness and universality. Hence the twelve gateways, facing three each to north, south, east and west, symbolised the universal invitation to all peoples of earth to enter the Holy City; "Whosoever will, let him come" (Rev. 22. 17). "In this mountain will the Lord of Hosts make unto *all* people a feast of fat things." (Isa. 25. 6.) The twelve foundations bearing the names of the Apostles stood for the universal appeal of the Gospel upon which the City is built. The height of the wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, indicated the full comprehensive nature of the Kingdom, that it will contain all of God's earthly perfected creation; nothing will be left outside.

The first function of the Holy City is to cleanse the nations. God is pictured as dwelling in the centre of the City, seated upon His Throne, His Son Jesus Christ beside Him, for the purpose of "wiping away all tears" from the eyes of men (Rev. 21. 4 and 22. 3-5), and bringing healing to all. This work is denoted by the spectacle of a River of Life, seen by John to proceed from the Throne and issue forth from the city to flow through the country outside. The A.V. verse division of chap. 22. 1-2 is unfortunate and obscures the true sense. Rightly expressed, the passage reads "*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street of it (the city). And on either side of the river was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" The term "street" means a broad highway, and "tree of life" is a generic term referring, not to one single tree, but to the species generally. John saw this broad highway extending outward from the city and the river flowing along its centre, the sides of the river being flanked with trees of life bearing twelve varieties of fruit. This is much like the vision seen by Ezekiel when he saw the river of life issuing from the Millennial Temple and flowing out to the east country,

the trees of life on its banks also being for food and healing (Ezek. 47. 1-12). This "street" corresponds to the "Highway of Holiness" spoken of by Isaiah in his 35th chapter "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it (overlook it or miss finding it); *for he shall be with them*". This "Highway of Holiness" is the symbolic road along which mankind will be invited and exhorted, during the Millennial Age, to travel, toward harmony and reconciliation with God through faith in Jesus Christ and acceptance of Him as Saviour.

"*And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*" (21. 24). These are the peoples to whom are addressed the words in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matt. 25. 34). When the evangelical work of the Millennial Age has been completed and all who are capable of recovery have become reconciled to God and attained human perfection, they are depicted as being the perpetual citizens of the Holy City. Every man will be a king, for God created man lord of the earthly dominion, and all men will share in the task of administering this earthly dominion in harmony with Divine laws. Hence all are "kings" and all will bring the glory and honour of sinless manhood into it.

Here the veil is drawn. The Holy Scriptures do not take us beyond the end of the Millennial Age to talk in detail of the "ages of glory to follow". Of the condition and life of the redeemed through the everlasting years they say nothing. We are shown the Plan of God for this earth at its triumphant conclusion, sin and evil doers destroyed, the Church of Christ exalted to the heavens, and all the nations fully converted to God and enjoying His munificence on the restored and perfected earth. "*Not a stain of sin mars the peace and harmony of a perfect society.*" For the further glories of revelation, of knowledge and of activity that must assuredly be the lot of all the redeemed we must wait, until the time shall come; but we can wait in full assurance that as Isaiah predicted (Isa. 32. 17) "*the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever*".

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## WITH BRETHREN IN GERMANY

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A Report by  
Bros. Nadal and Allen

It is with the keenest of impressions of the love our Heavenly Father has for His children, and a very deep appreciation of the love of the German brethren for the British brethren, that we have returned from the most intensive of visits made to them since we were drawn into close mutual contact, immediately after the close of the second world war.

The invitation for our joint visit had been pressed many months earlier, had not been entered into lightly, and was only undertaken after seeking the Lord's will on the matter, and much careful preparation. The reception which we received everywhere was beyond ordinary human understanding, and is to be appreciated only by those who are truly one in Christ—who have recognised the love which our God and Lord Jesus Christ have shone into their hearts, and are determined to reflect that love to those whom God has called to be their brethren.

We had many evidences, both in the preparation, and as we journeyed, of our Father's love and watchcare; and evidence too of the Adversary's desire to thwart the will of the Lord.

The outward crossing from Harwich to the Hook of Holland was made on June 5th. The "Manna" text that day read:—"In thee O Lord, do I put my trust". (Psalm 31) and was a reminder to us of our dependence upon Him, and an encouragement as we sought to carry it out. We knew too, that we went forth under the good wishes and prayers of many brethren and classes, both in Britain and Germany.

On arrival at the Hook of Holland we were met by Bro. Alblas of The Hague (whom some will remember as having previously visited this country) together with a few relatives and friends, and were piloted to The Hague, thus giving Bro. Allen a helpful opportunity of becoming acquainted with the Continental style of driving on the right hand side of the road. We were privileged to meet the Ecclesia of The Hague, some 40 brethren being present, and we noted with joy a growth in the Christian way, a closer unity and a sense of fellowship one with the other, and with us, than had ever been the case before.

June 7th saw us on the way to the German

border, which was crossed at Bentheim. Here, in the provision of the Lord, we were indebted to the daughter-in-law of Bro. Alblas for conducting us helpfully some 125 miles across Holland to the frontier station of Oldenzaal. As we looked across the dividing "no man's land" we saw, for the first time, our German interpreter-to-be, Bro. Karl Ludwig Flint, waiting for us some 200 yards away at the Bentheim station. He had sent us his photograph to assist recognition, but it needed no photograph to assure us. We spontaneously recognised each other, even at that distance.

We would pause to pay tribute to one who was to be our close, intimate, and constant companion for the coming month. He had assembled all the possible "off" time from work, for a year, to enable him to make this journey with us, and this in addition to the many hours of spare time already previously given, assisting in the translation of our talks for the German brethren. In foregoing any possible holiday for himself, he gave his time to the Lord, and to us, willingly, ungrudgingly, and most helpfully. In his own land he was adamant that we should not refer to it, and declined to translate the briefest reference to it. Here it is fitting that we should make mention of our appreciation of his service, for we saw so often in his helpfulness to us the highest form of Christian love. The words of John 13. 35 well apply:—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another".

Having crossed the border, and the Customs formalities passed, we travelled on to Bro. Flint's home at Oerlinghausen, by Bielefeld, where we received a warm welcome from his wife, sister Iltraut Flint, and two children. . . Here we enjoyed the comforts and privileges of a precious Christian home, which spoke in every action of the love of the Lord for His own. Here our final arrangements were completed, and last adjustments made in the translation of our talks.

Early on June 9th we moved on to Kirch- lengersen for the Whitsun Convention, the event of the year in the arrangements of the German brethren. It was due to start at 9.0 a.m. and although we arrived well on time,

we found the hall full, some 400 brethren having already arrived, and the Convention in full swing. As we entered they were singing a hymn in their own rich musical language, and it was a thrill for us to join them in our own tongue. We appreciated most acutely that as our voices were raised in praise to our Heavenly Father in different tongues, so He, who had originally arranged the dividing of the tongues, was listening to us all.

Only after having attended such a Convention can one appreciate the enthusiasm of the German brethren, and their expressions of joy in being able, once again, to meet and associate together in the bonds of Christian fellowship and love. How we need to appreciate this ourselves, and the necessity for "assembling ourselves together" whilst yet there is time, for we never know when these opportunities which are ours may be withdrawn, as darkness sets in.

The Convention proper occupies two days, from 9.0 a.m. until about 7.0 p.m. with a break for lunch from about 12.30 p.m. until 2.0 p.m. The whole time is fully occupied, chiefly in talks by brethren from all over the country. Whilst it was obvious that brethren who spoke held varying thoughts on doctrinal and other matters, it was equally obvious that a very deep and sincere heart condition was manifested. One English brother was scheduled to speak on the first day, and the other on the second. The talks were well received and appreciated, and throughout the Convention, on many occasions, we were reminded of their very warm love for the British and American brethren generally.

At this Convention we were able to pass on the Scriptural greetings from 27 British Classes, and the 5 brethren who had previously visited them. And as we journeyed on, the list of greetings snowballed, as each class visited desired to add their greetings to the list. So we bring you, also, many such greetings from the brethren, including the following:—

Deut. 33. 27; Psa. 119. 103-105; Isa 43. 1; Jno. 17. 19-20; Acts 20. 32; Rom. 15. 13; 2 Cor. 4. 13; 5. 1; 13. 13-14; Eph. 2. 10; 4. 15; Phil. 2. 5-7; 3. 20-21; Heb. 13. 20-21.

A happy feature of the Convention was the baptism of two sisters, the service being carried out with the same simplicity, earnestness, and devotion, as is witnessed at our own baptismal services.

As the Convention proper concluded, the remainder of the week was devoted to a

"Bible Week", as they call it. Here, such brethren as are able to use time from their annual holiday, or can spare the time by other means, continue to gather and discuss thoroughly such matters from the Word, as they consider require their attention.

We ourselves used the day or so left to us before moving on, in visiting brethren at Minden, Herford, and Lohe, whom we knew well, and hold in high regard for their love of the Truth.

During these happy convention days our home was at the farmhouse of Sis. Stohlmann of Lohe, who with her son and daughters sought our every comfort, and with whom we enjoyed rich and helpful fellowship.

We left these dear brethren, with much feeling, on Thursday morning, June 13th, to commence our long tour of some of the classes. We first journeyed 170 miles to Emden, where we were received by Bro. and Sis. Ramaker, whose daughter was one of the two at Kirchlegern. Here also we met Sis. Margarete Vieillard, of Berlin, whom some will remember as having visited this country. At this time we obtained news of brethren in the Eastern zone of Germany. It was our first visit to this place, but as they gathered together, we recognised the same spirit, and same welcome, as was customary everywhere.

After an uplifting meeting and fellowship with the brethren, we departed the next morning for the home of Bro. and Sis. Mehnen of Wilhelmshaven. Here, as we met the brethren, a class of some twenty or thirty, the same spirit of love and desire for fellowship prevailed. Here, as also elsewhere, we noted their appreciation, as our interpreter lingered over the greetings from Britain, mentioning class by class. Thus it was, that often as we journeyed from place to place, and faces of the brethren lit up, we were reminded of the Apostle Paul's reference to greetings, as given in 1. Cor. 16. 20, "*All the brethren greet you*", and similarly in 1. Thess. 5. 26, and again as in Titus 3. 15, "*All that are with me salute thee*".

It was at Wilhelmshaven that we met our first real experience of difficulties of language. We separated for the night, and some of us were deputed to sleep at the home of dear old Sis. Funda, who, with her daughter, cared for us in every possible way, although unable to express a word in English. However we managed to make ourselves well understood and eventually conversed on those deeper issues so dear to us.

On Saturday, June 15th, we moved on, some 130 miles to Luneburg, pausing on the way at Oldenburg, to meet Sis. Hanna Schneider, daughter-in-law of the late Sis. Norma Schneider, well known to many brethren in this country. Arriving at Luneburg we were greeted by Bro. Burmester, whom some will know as being particularly interested in the Pyramid Witness. At the house of Sis. Flugel our material needs were supplied, and a most enjoyable meeting held.

According to programme, we continued that same evening on to Uelzen, the home of Bro. and Sis. Otto and Agnes Sadlack, whom many here will remember for his ministry and true Christian fellowship a few years ago. Here too, just outside Uelzen in the village of Veersse, lives Bro. Emil Sadlack and his sisters.

At Uelzen a meeting, attended by some 20 or more brethren was held, and the fellowship which followed came to an end all too soon.

On Monday, June 17th, we journeyed to Hannover where a half day convention had been arranged. Some forty brethren gathered and gave their close attention to the two talks we were privileged to give. The meeting closed with a brief period of fellowship with some old and close friends, including Bro. and Sis. Sander, Bro. Geruschkat, Bro. Jordan and Sis. Dortmund.

The following day found us at Kassel, a fine town, which had suffered badly from air raids in the last war, but which, we were glad to note, has now been speedily, and well, rebuilt. Here some 20 brethren gathered under the chairmanship of Bro. Noll, with the same desire to worship the Lord and appreciate His Truth. We left Kassel that same evening for Marburg on the Lahn, some 60 miles distant. Our way lay through very hilly country, and sometimes over roads far from good, and we eventually reached our destination at 10.30 p.m., in a violent thunderstorm. The roads are often heavily cobbled, with no "cats eyes" or white line on the road, to assist the way. We had passed well into the town when we saw the two waving torches of two brethren beckoning us on, as they came down the hillside to meet us. They called it a road, "Gabelsberger Strasse" to be precise, but as we viewed it in daylight the next morning, marvelled that we had ever reached the house in a car. However, that was the worst of our visit to Marburg. We had truly reached an oasis, the home of the Hecht family, long known in our association with the German

brethren. The welcome we received is not to be described in words, nor will space allow to tell of the loving care bestowed upon us in every direction by every member of the family. We had been associated with them closely in the days of hardship and want in Germany, when they knew the pinch of poverty and dire need, but now, by the grace of God, they were in much more favourable circumstances, and we had evidence in plenty of their efforts to assist their less fortunate brethren.

The house they had built accommodated three families, all related, and they entertained other visitors besides ourselves, some being elderly brethren, enjoying a month's rest and recuperation. The two days we spent there was like a non-stop Convention, without effort. From breakfast until midnight the mind was directed towards higher things, helpful discussions on the "manna" and many other Scriptures being enjoyed. Although there were more than twenty of us gathered under that roof, everything, without exception, was carried out smoothly, quietly, and enjoyably. One thought of our Lord resting in that sweet home at Bethany, and one felt the desire of the brethren was to serve the Lord, and all who desired to do His will. At the close of the day, in the stillness of the night, we experienced the exquisite pleasure of winding up the steep hillside to a little plateau near the top, and rendering a few hymns unto the Lord, until we went to rest.

We left early on the morning of June 21st for Furth, by Nuremburg some 200 miles journey, and here we found our meeting was to be held in what we would term a public house. Some 20 brethren were present; we learned that, as happens in other places in Germany, it is the only place where brethren can get a room in which to meet. Here, as we experienced elsewhere, the conduct of the brethren had resulted in much respect, and immediately, from the opening hymn until the close of the meeting, a respectful silence was maintained.

From Nuremburg we went on the next morning to Munich, to the home of Bro. Willi Leibiger, a loveable brother and stalwart of the Truth. Here our experiences were varied. On arrival, the car was taken to a garage for overhaul. No sooner had it been lifted on the hoist, than it toppled over, narrowly missing Bro. Allen, and badly smashing the body work. In this we saw the hand of the Adversary seeking to thwart our service for the

Lord, and we saw too, the protecting care of our loving Father, who, as in the case of Job, allowed the Adversary to touch the substance, but protected the life of his servant. We were compelled to remain in Munich an extra day whilst the bodywork of the car was temporarily repaired; this unfortunately cancelled a visit we had hoped to make to a brother's house, but the calamity in no way interfered with our itinerary as arranged.

On Tuesday, June 26th we were enabled to continue to Stuttgart. Here we met a brother well known to many of us, Bro. Reinhold Lauster. With him, we gathered at the homes of Sis. Bosch and Bro. and Sis. Wilhelm Staiger, to meet many brethren of long standing acquaintance, again to talk over the Word of Truth.

After a day's rest we left for Mulhouse in Alsace, France, a distance of some 170 miles, chiefly through the Black Forest. On the way we passed through some of the loveliest of German scenery, although the winding roads and hilly gradients added much to the strain of driving. However, once again we arrived on schedule, receiving a warm welcome from Bro. and Sis. Kauffmann and the 20 or so brethren who met with us. Here also, we learned with sadness from Sis. Haedike, who accomodated some of us for the night, that Bro. Haedike, who spoke English fluently and who had looked forward joyfully to our coming, had passed away suddenly but ten days before.

Returning next morning into Germany, we contacted at Freiburg the smallest class of our tour, four brethren, apart from ourselves. There, at the home of Bro. and Sis. Kromer, the welcome and fervour was the same, as in the larger classes.

Now we were entering upon the last week of the tour. Sunday, June 30th, began an early morning run to Mannheim. We broke our journey on the way to lunch with Bro. and Sis. Rauer at Herxheim, brethren who are well known to several in this country. With them, we continued to Mannheim, receiving a very warm welcome from Bro. Wissinger, and the class of 20 or more brethren.

The next morning, July 1st saw us again on our way to Marburg. At Marburg we spent a quiet evening, and the following morning said our final farewells. Arriving at Dortmund we experienced that same warm, loving welcome from the brethren, and happy fellowship at the home of Bro. and Sis. Kassner.

Leaving Dortmund on July 3rd we made

our way to our last, but not least, call, at Essen. We shall ever remember the hospitality extended to us at the home of Bro. and Sis. Schroder. Our last meeting was on the same happy terms, and in the same deep spiritual atmosphere which had characterised the whole of our journey. At the close of the meeting, we insisted that our interpreter, who had served us so faithfully and well should return home to his wife and family at Oerlinghausen that night, that he might have one free day to spend with them ere returning to his work. Obviously eager to be reunited with his loved ones, but loath to leave us, and desirous of completing that which he had begun, to the full, we prevailed upon him to go. Only our Father, and the five of us, know the bond of love which had bound us during that month of fellowship, and we separated with an earnest longing that we might soon meet again.

We returned to the home of Bro. and Sis. Schroder, where they cared for our material needs, afterwards making it quite clear that they were leaving their home at our disposal for the night, they themselves sleeping with friends nearby. According also to their promise they returned at 6.30 a.m. the next morning to feed us, and assist us in our homeward arrangements. Using their own car they piloted us through the busy and difficult streets of Essen to the open country, and having put us well on our way to the Dutch border, we took our final farewells of these dear German brethren. It was certainly not without sadness. We all realised we had had a wonderfully uplifting time, and were parting from those who had shown the true spirit of brethren in their brotherly kindness and love. Even in so lengthy a report, there is much which of necessity must be left out or curtailed, and in summing up the outstanding impressions left upon our minds at the close of this tour, we would suggest the following:-

The constant and most marked over-ruling protection and guidance of our Heavenly Father, even in the calamity which overtook us.

The depth and warmth of love extended to all of us, by *all* German brethren, and which we accept, not merely as their expressed love, for the four of us who visited them, but as a deep and sincere Christian love, expressed toward *all* sincere and true British brethren.

Their continued faithfulness in the Narrow Way, and the practical manner they put it

into operation concerning one another. Lastly, an impression of sadness, concerning

the condition of brethren still in the Eastern Zone of Germany.

## **A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

*"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth!"* (Rom. 14. 4).

It is so fatally easy to value another brother's or sister's service by one's own bushel measure. We all desire very earnestly to serve our Lord and the interests of His Kingdom. We generally take delight in speaking of Him and of the Divine Plan to any who will listen. And we all have our own ideas of how best the Gospel may be preached. Is it the very intensity of our own earnestness in this direction that makes us want every other bondsman of Jesus Christ to serve in just the same manner that seems good to us? Is it the measure of our own personal talent and success in one particular field of ministry that blinds us to the possibility of effective service being rendered in another manner, *in other hands*?

"There are diversities of gifts . . . there are differences of administrations . . . but it is the same God that worketh" (1 Cor. 12. 4-6). When *will* we learn that the grandest characteristic of all God's handiwork is variety, and that He has ordained the accomplishment of His service in such a fashion that "every joint" supplieth a contribution fitted to its place in the body?

Says one, loftily, secure in his ability and privilege to address the assemblies as befits the office of an elder in the Church. "There is no doubt that the preaching of the Word is *the* great means the Lord has ordained for the spiritual growth of His people." All very well—but what discouragement to the brother who is temperamentally quite unable to stand before an audience and deliver a prepared discourse, but in his own quiet way can lead a study circle in leisured discussion of the Scriptures to the very real edification of his fellows.

It was teacher's birthday. For weeks beforehand her pupils had been busy making pretty aprons and tending little plants in pots to give her on the day, for this teacher was greatly beloved. At length lesson time was over and they crowded round with their

offerings, stepping back with gratified smiles as the teacher expressed her surprise and delight at each successive gift. Last of all came the "black sheep" of the class, grubby and untidy, half hesitating and half defiant, avoiding the amused looks of his classmates as he extended a tightly clenched fist and deposited into teacher's hand—a hot and sticky piece of butterscotch and three marbles.

But that teacher was wise—wiser than many who have attained eldership in the assemblies. "Oh, how lovely" she cried, smiling down at the anxious little face below her. "It's *years* since anybody gave me marbles for my birthday; and I just adore butterscotch."

The grubby one made his way back to his desk, head held high and face radiant. He loved his teacher, and he had so feared his gift would be rejected, but she had understood. He had done what he could.

Brethren in the Lord! Be very careful how you disparage the service another is trying to render, just because you "cannot see what good it will do." You may be the means of dashing the enthusiasm of one who will never be able to serve in the big things, as you are privileged to serve, but is nevertheless trying to contribute some small mite to the work of the Master Whom we all love. "Take heed that ye despise not *one* of these little ones."

---

*"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons."* (Matt. 10. 8.).

This is a point not generally noticed, that the twelve disciples had power to raise the dead. One wonders if they ever used it. There is no record of any of them having done so before Pentecost. St. Peter raised Dorcas to life afterwards (Acts 10) but this is the only recorded instance (Eutychus, who fell out of the window when St. Paul was preaching at Troas, was not dead. St. Paul revived him but this was not a raising of the dead). It may well have been that many more people in Judea and Galilee experienced a revival of life after death at the hands of Jesus and perhaps his disciples than those whose names the Gospel records have preserved.



Thou, therefore, endure  
hardness as a good  
soldier of Jesus Christ

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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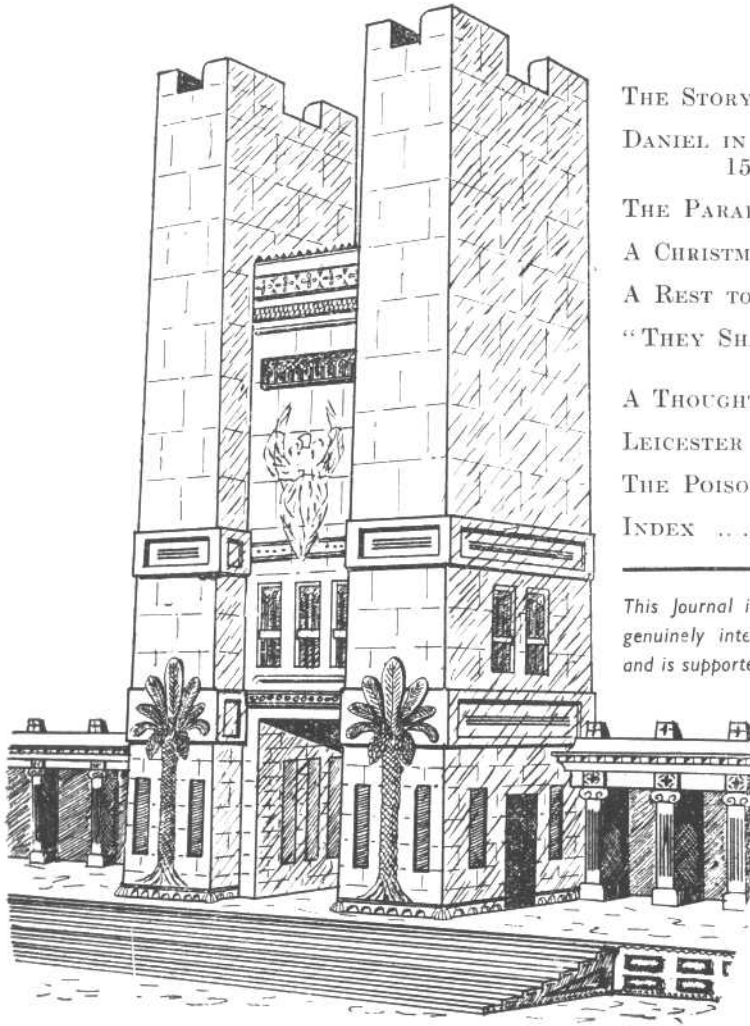
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The Bible Fellowship Union is not responsible for, and does not necessarily endorse, functions, activities or publications appearing hereunder in the names of other groups or individuals. Space is given to such announcements in the light of our knowledge that they are of interest to particular sections of our readers' list.*

The Manchester Christian Fellowship is to hold its annual New Year Convention on 4th and 5th January, 1958 at the Rusholme Public Hall, Rusholme, Manchester. Details may be obtained from Mr. E. Halton, 13 Harrow Drive, Brooklands, Sale, Ches.

\* \* \*

At this season of the year it is usual to mention the existence of the Benevolent Fund for the assistance of needy brethren, controlled by a committee the Secretary and Treasurer of which is Mr. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, who will gladly receive and acknowledge gifts and enquiries.

\* \* \*

Our friends in the United States, the Pastoral Bible Institute of Brooklyn, have recently re-published the second volume of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" by R. E. Streeter, which had been out of print for some years. A few copies have been sent to us for the convenience of readers in this country who have been waiting to secure copies of one or both volumes, and these can be sent by return upon request. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" is a two-volume cloth bound work totalling 1200 pages, comprising an exhaustive exposition of the Book of Revelation on the lines of the "Historical" school, featuring extensive citations from the works of a good many well-known expositors of the period prior to 1923, when the work was first published. The price of Volume 2 alone is 12/6 post paid, and that of the set, Vols 1 and

2 together, is 17/6 post paid. Orders should be sent to Hounslow.

\* \* \*

A brother in Blaby, Leics., in order to meet a local need is engaged in the rebinding of some old copies of the "Bible Students Hymnal" which in some cases have pages missing. In order to complete his task he is in need of some worn-out copies of the book which themselves need not be complete provided they contain a large proportion of the pages. It will be appreciated if any reader possessing such unusable copies of this book and willing to part with them will send them to Mr. E. Shaw, 63 Wigston Road, Blaby, Leics. Postage will willingly be refunded.

\* \* \*

We are advised that the 1958 Christian Home Calendar, for which some readers regularly enquire, is now available, same as in past years, with coloured Scriptural illustrations each month and daily text, price 3/3 each post free, 9/- for three copies, from the Christian Truth Institute, 174 Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23. Please send order to Forest Hill and not to us; we cannot handle same.

### BETWEEN OURSELVES

The despatch of each issue of the "Monthly" is usually followed by the return to us, by the Post Office, of up to half a dozen copies endorsed "Gone away", the intended recipients having omitted to advise us of change of address. The majority of such usually remember to advise during the next month or so; in the meantime the Post Office has collected 2d. return delivery postage and the re-posting of the issue when the correct address is sent in involves another 2d.—a total of 6d. for one issue. It will be sincerely appreciated if friends who are going to a new address will remember to advise us in good time so that our records can be adjusted before the next issue is sent out.

## THE STORY OF THE SHEPHERDS

A reflection on events of the first Christmas

*"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." (Luke 2. 8-9.)*

Favoured men, the first to gaze upon the Lord's Christ! The wise men from the East came with their gifts, but the shepherds were there first with their homage, and for ever afterwards those Judean shepherds glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it had been told unto them.

It would seem that the wise men came much later. The shepherds found Him in a cave, lying in a manger. By the time the wise men arrived Joseph had secured temporary accommodation in a house for his young wife and her first born son (Matt. 2. 11). The shepherds heard the wonderful news the same day that it happened; the angel had said "unto you is born *this day* in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". Perhaps even whilst he was speaking Mary was experiencing the never-to-be-forgotten wonder of taking her child into her arms for the first time. When the wise men ascended the steps of Herod's palace the child was perhaps already a few days or even weeks old, for their question was "Where is He that is *born* King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2. 2). Then there had to be a conference of chief priests and scribes to agree upon an answer to Herod's question that would afford the monarch the information he wanted without giving offence to his royal dignity. Even after the reply had been given, and doubtless further discussions, which have not been recorded, held between king and priests, the wise men were called again into the royal presence, and in receiving instructions to go to Bethlehem, were admonished to bring Herod word again.

Now all this must have occupied a long time, for Mary remained at Bethlehem forty days, the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses (Luke 2. 12), and then Joseph took her, and her child, to the Temple in Jerusalem to present him before the Lord. There was no fear of Herod as yet. There, in the Temple court, the aged Simeon took the child into his arms and praised God that,

according to His word, he had set his eyes upon the One who was to be a light to lighten the nations, and the glory of His people Israel. Likewise Anna, coming in at that moment, gave thanks also, and spake of Him to all who looked for deliverance in Jerusalem. Herod's palace was only just across the valley from the Temple, but the proud king knew nothing of all this; evidently even then, forty days after the birth of Jesus, the wise men had not found their way to the house where the babe lay.

What a striking contrast there is in the manner of this revelation to the wise men and that to the shepherds! Those were guided by a star, but these were visited by an angel! The nature of that star which led the three travellers from the East has never been satisfactorily determined. All kinds of theories have been hazarded, but no one really knows. One thing is certain; the star was of this material creation, one of the worlds of light that God has set in space in the dim faraway, ages before this world was, one of the "things that are made". The shepherds received greater honour, a personal visit from a special messenger of the Most High, a heavenly angel speaking with them and thrilling their hearts with the gladsome news. Once again God had reserved his choicest favour for the meek and lowly of heart.

Was it Gabriel, the archangel, who visited the shepherds that night? We cannot say for certain, but it is almost a foregone conclusion that he was the one sent. That expression "the angel of the Lord" in Luke 2. 9 seems to imply that the visitor was of exceptional rank in the heavenly realm, and the thought is supported by the coming of a "multitude" of angels to join him after he, alone, had delivered the message. He seems to have been a leader amongst them. There is no reason to think that the shepherds looked up and beheld angels flying in the heavens above their heads in the manner suggested by so many mediæval paintings and representations of this event. It is almost certain that they made themselves manifest in the fashion already so familiar to the people of Old Testament times, as men, standing upon the earth, glorious in shining raiment, assuredly, and quite certainly manifesting in their countenances evidence of their heavenly origin. The shepherds must

have lifted up their eyes and seen the hillsides around them crowded with the serried ranks of those resplendent beings, the radiance of their concourse turning night into day, the music of their voices rising and falling upon the still air like that of a vast choir, as they sang of glory to God in the highest, and peace upon earth to men. Then the radiance began to fade, the outline of those beautiful forms become misty and shadowy, the hills and rocks and trees slowly to show up again, and the darkness settle upon the scene as the golden voices died away and were still. The angels had gone away into heaven; but those shepherds knew that what they had seen had been no fantasy; it was solid fact, and so with one accord they rose up to go without delay into Bethlehem to see for themselves this thing that had come to pass.

Why were these particular men singled out for this honour? Did God arbitrarily pick out a group of shepherds who just happened to be in the vicinity in order to vouchsafe to someone this marvellous revelation? Surely not! These men were the first human beings to greet earth's rightful king! They were privileged to extend earth's welcome to the One who had come from above. On behalf of the entire human race whom Jesus had come to save, they made obeisance. We are so accustomed to the words of John "he came unto his own, and his own received him not" that we forget that *the first men to see Jesus in the flesh did receive Him*, and talked about Him for the rest of their lives. The conclusion is that these men were men of God, waiting in hope and faith and expectancy for the promised Messiah, and—who knows?—probably of that band which "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" (Luke 2, 38). What more appropriate than that the Most High should apprise the "Watchers" of that day of the fact that the One for whom they looked had come at last?

"*And this shall be a sign unto thee*"—a wonder. Surely it was a wonder to men trained to expect Messiah as a great military leader and powerful King, overawing and destroying all the enemies of Israel and restoring the kingdom's former glories! "*Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*" But their faith did not stagger; there is nothing in any part of the account to suggest that they even questioned the apparent strangeness of this Messianic Advent, so different from all that they had been taught and led to expect. They

came, they saw, and they worshipped, and went away to spread the glad news that the King had come.

Thirty years were to roll by before anything more was known of this strange happening. It is unlikely that many of the shepherds ever heard again of the babe whom they had been thus led to visit and adore. They were rural Judeans, and probably never left the vicinity of Bethlehem for the rest of their lives. The babe was taken away by his parents within a few weeks and never returned. Thirty years is a long time; it may be that some of the younger ones among them, grown into old age, began to hear of the prophet who had arisen in Galilee, and of His baptism in Jordan, and connected the tidings with the scene they had witnessed a generation previously. At first they must have talked about their amazing experience often as they lay around their camp fires at night or drove their flocks together through the day, but as the years went by perhaps some, at least, of them, began to wonder a little . . .

Seven or eight weeks had passed since that night, and the wise men had come, and presented their gifts, and departed. The sojourn at Bethlehem was ended; Joseph, warned of God in a dream, made preparations for a hurried flight into Egypt. Herod's soldiers would very shortly be on the scene, searching for the young child. Perhaps the shepherds had visited the Holy Family more than once during those eight weeks. They would hardly have been likely to make no further attempt to offer worship to the Saviour of the world, their Messiah. Perhaps, seeing Him like that, and believing, they glimpsed something of the truth which the disciples of Jesus, thirty years later, found it so very difficult to accept, the necessity of a Coming in humiliation before there could be a Coming in power. They may have learned some things from Mary, and Mary in turn may have learned much from them, for we are told that she "*kept all these things and pondered them in her heart*".

So one day Bethlehem was left behind, and the young husband and wife, bearing their precious treasure with them, set out for Egypt and safety. Herod could not pursue them there, for Egypt lay outside his sphere of jurisdiction. And when, apparently only a few months later, Herod died and they returned, they passed by Bethlehem and settled sixty miles to the north, in Galilee, there to remain until the day of Jesus'

showing to Israel.

Luke says nothing of the flight into Egypt; only Matthew records that. From Luke's account it would seem as if they went straight from Bethlehem to Nazareth. Why did he omit the part of the history relating to the flight? The obvious difference in the two narratives has given occasion for the assertion that one or the other account is unreliable, or even both, and that the historical value of both Gospels must be discounted accordingly. As with the majority of such statements, investigation usually reveals that the apparently contradictory stories can be reasonably well harmonised.

It is thought that Luke drew the materials for his Gospel largely from Mary the mother of Jesus. We do not know how long Mary lived after the Crucifixion, but it might quite easily have been twenty years, for she was probably no more than eighteen or twenty years of age when the angel Gabriel appeared to her on the memorable night of the Annunciation. It is quite possible for Luke to have known her. Who knows but that the girl-wife, horrified and grieved at the massacre of the Innocents and the anguish of their mothers, and knowing that this calamity had come upon them because of her own child, had put the evil memory far away from her, and in after days either did not tell the details to Luke or would not have them included in the gospel which he was preparing? Matthew, of course, would have had it from Jesus Himself, and it may be that the overruling power of the Holy Spirit thus respected Mary's reticence whilst taking care that the account should be preserved in one of the Gospels. It is not wise to be dogmatic, but the explanation may lie along this line.

So passed the first Christmas, a season fraught with great joy and great sorrow. None of the principal characters in the drama knew of the tremendous consequences that were to arise from the happenings of those few weeks.

*"And they did not receive Him, because His face was set to go to Jerusalem"* (Luke 9. 51-55).

All Palestinians looked alike in features and in dress, in that day, just as to-day, and there was no physical difference between Samaritan and Jew then, just as there is none between Palestinian Arab and Palestinian Jew to-day. It was the fact that the little band was headed for Jerusalem that betrayed their Jewish nationality. The racial animosity that smouldered between Samaritan and Jew overpowered the proverbial Eastern hospital-

None of them knew how many more Christmas seasons were to come and go before the song of the angels could become an accomplished fact. To-day, peace on earth and goodwill among men seems farther off than ever. But it will come.

Perhaps, as we enter into another Christmas season we may take time to think awhile of those simple Judean shepherds, who, one dark night, saw a great light, and in the power and inspiration of that light became changed men. They came to see and to worship; they returned glorifying and praising God for the things that they had learned and witnessed. We come to the Lord Jesus in like manner, but we see more than a babe in a manger. We see the King, resplendent in His power, taking to Himself the sceptre of authority, bringing this evil world order to an end that He might set up in its place His own everlasting Kingdom of peace. To the age-old angels' song there is added a new stanza: *"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in"*. Like those simple Judeans of old, we must needs return glorifying and praising God for the evidence of the coming Kingdom that we have seen, and telling of that Kingdom with such zeal, such certitude, such forthrightness, that, like the people of Bethlehem and the country round about at the time of that first Christmas, *"all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them"*. The people of to-day sadly need such a message; the time is at hand, the angelic vision has appeared to us; our eyes have seen the King in His beauty. What else can we do but go on in the power and wonder of that peerless vision, talking to each other about it, telling our neighbours and friends the tremendous story, looking in faith for the fulfilment of the promise, waiting, watching, hoping, praying; until the angels come again, this time to raise the strains of a song that never shall die away so long as the earth endures.

ity which normally was extended to all travellers at night, and caused them to refuse lodging to the pilgrims. It was not that the Samaritans wished to "speed the travellers on their way". Recognising this hostility, the disciples, imbued, we fear, with the spirit of retaliation, wished to call down fire from heaven to consume them, and so gave opportunity for a reproof which is often needed to-day as much as then: *"Ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them"*.

## **DANIEL IN BABYLON**

*The story of a  
great man's faith*

### 15. Until The End Be

There is something heartrendingly tragic in the spectacle of an old man deprived, at the last, of the fruits of that for which he has laboured zealously and perseveringly through a long life. It happens in everyday affairs and Christians are not immune; it happened to stalwart men of God in Old Testament days. Moses led the children of Israel forty years through the wilderness toward the promised Land, but he was destined to behold that fair goal only with his eyes and never himself to set foot in it. Samuel, serving his God and his country from childhood to old age, welded a disorganised rabble of tribesmen into a nation, gave them a rule of justice and organised government, and died in obscurity leaving the fruits of his work to be reaped by King David. The aged priest Simeon, leader of the tiny band that in the days just prior to the First Advent "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" lived just long enough to take the Babe in his old arms; but he was laid aside in death before the glory of the Messiah was revealed to the believing in Israel. So it was with Daniel. Taken from his home in early youth, he lived his whole life in an alien land, passionately looking forward to the day when God would relent and set the captives free, restoring again the glories of the beloved city—but when at last the time did come he must perforce, like Moses, see his fellows go with rejoicing into the promised land, knowing that he could never go with them. Daniel had done more than any man to keep alive the knowledge of God and hope in His promise; he had interceded with God on behalf of his people; in political life he probably did much to make the Return possible, but he himself was left out of its realisation. Two years after the Restoration, we find him still in Babylon, quite definitely now waiting for the end. Daniel was one of those of whom the writer to the Hebrews afterwards spoke when he said "these all, having received a good report through faith, received not the promise." Like many another faithful warrior for God, he was laid aside to await his reward in a better day.

Two years after the capture of Babylon by the Medes came the Restoration. It is evident that Darius the Mede had died and Cyrus became the recognised lawful ruler of the empire, a position he had held in practice for

more than twenty years past. The Median dynasty was at an end; in Cyrus the Persian dynasty began. The change was marked by an unexpected toleration of all the subject peoples' native religions; the favour shown the Jewish captives in allowing them to revive the Judean state and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem was only one of several such concessions granted by the Persian king to the varied peoples under his rule. Clay tablets of Cyrus have been discovered in which he speaks of his intention to rebuild various of the idolatrous Temples in much the same language that he used in his famous decree to the Jews as recorded in the first chapter of Ezra.

Daniel must have seen the jubilant company set off for Judah with mixed feelings. There would have been quiet joy that at last the promise of God was fulfilled and the Captivity was ended; the Temple was to be rebuilt and the worship of God in His own city restored. But there was something lacking; the throne of the Lord was not to be established in Jerusalem and no king of David's line would sit in regal power on Mount Zion. Zerubbabel, grandson of King Jehoiachin and therefore the one whose right it was thus to reign, was leader of the Restoration only by appointment of Cyrus and he was nothing more than the Persian governor of Jerusalem, responsible to Cyrus for the good behaviour of the people. Joshua of the sons of Aaron was the legitimate High Priest and fully authorised to administer the rites of his sacred office, but even with the Temple rebuilt there was still a vital deficiency; the Ark of the Covenant was not there and the Most Holy was empty. This is not the real triumph of Israel, Daniel must have reflected sadly as the joyous shouts died away and the long procession disappeared in the distance. There is still much to transpire before the good promises of God can be fulfilled. So he betook himself again to study and prayer that he might continue to be a faithful vehicle of the Holy Spirit in making known to the sons of men the things that God purposed to do.

Life in Babylon went on much as before. The pioneers away in Jerusalem attacked their task with enthusiasm at first and then drifted away to their own interests and the

building of the Temple was neglected. Not much news got back to Babylon for communications were slow and difficult, and in any case most of the Jews who remained in Babylon had done so because they were not greatly interested in the rebuilding of Judea. They had mostly been born in Babylon and the land of Judah was a foreign and unknown country to them. Daniel probably had little in common with the Babylonian Jews; they were not his kind; but there were almost certainly a few remaining in the city whose hearts were in Judea but whose circumstances for one reason or another forbade their participating in the Return and with these Daniel would have found a common bond of interest and friendship. So for two years more he studied and pondered until at last another and a final revelation of God's future purposes was impressed upon his mind.

He was in the country, on the bank of the River Tigris, when he saw the vision. The Tigris flows, at its nearest, some twenty or more miles from Babylon and it is evident that for some reason Daniel had either temporarily or permanently left the city. It might be that he possessed a country retreat at that spot and had gone there to meditate quietly during the three weeks of mental stress to which he refers in Chapter 10. Perhaps, on the other hand, he had for the last time retired from the active administration of affairs of state—he was now about ninety years of age—and had secluded himself in some quiet country or riverside spot calmly to await his end. At any rate it was by the swiftly flowing waters of the river which divided Babylonia from Persia that he perceived the glorious angel descending to meet him and was struck speechless and helpless before the magnificence of that glory.

Ezekiel tells of seeing such a vision; so does Isaiah. Saul of Tarsus had the same experience, on the Damascus road. The fact that such manifestations are not the lot of Christians to-day is no argument against their reality to those faithful men of old time who did see them, nor the verity of their accounts. Something more than the natural sense of sight is necessary and all men do not possess that something more. The men with Saul of Tarsus saw nothing; it is significant though that a nameless fear seized upon them and they ran and hid themselves. The young man with Elisha could not see what the prophet saw. Heaven's forces passing and re-passing on the mountains around them for their protection, until Elisha prayed that his eyes

might be opened. It was not that the young man's natural eyesight was supernaturally sharpened at that moment. Sights of heavenly things can only be impressed upon the human mind by the Holy Spirit, and only Spirit-filled men can be receptive to spiritual things. "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually discerned.*" (I Cor. 2. 9-10). We in this modern materialistic Age are ourselves so cumbered with material thoughts and pre-occupations of all kinds that we cannot so easily, as could Daniel in his quiet retreat and the intensity of his communion with God, lend ourselves to be vehicles of the Holy Spirit.

It is not uncommon, though, in this our day, for watchers around the bed of a dying Christian to catch a few whispered words or glimpse a sudden look in the failing eyes, as though the departing one had suddenly seen some wonderfully glorious vista of which the watchers had no consciousness. It may well be that as the material things slip rapidly away in the last few moments of earthly life the Holy Spirit finds more abundant entrance into a mind that has always been a sanctuary of that Spirit, and sights such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and even Saul perceived, appear plainly revealed to the inner consciousness.

Gabriel's message covers the whole of Chapter 11 and part of Chapter 12. It is readily recognised as an outline of world events which in Daniel's day were still future but which must be accomplished before the final deliverance of Israel. Very little of it could have been intelligible to Daniel; there is still much of it which, while not unintelligible to us to-day, is nevertheless so obscure that there are a great variety of interpretations. The first four verses of Chapter 11 are obvious enough to us; they describe briefly the passing of the Persian empire and the coming of the Greeks, the "belly and thighs of brass" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream image and the leopard of Daniel's earlier vision. That much was probably plain to him. The remainder goes off into a long catalogue of "wars and rumours of wars" in which the most definite factor is the climax, the coming of Christ at His Second Advent, pictured by the standing up of Michael the Archangel for the salvation of Israel. That, at least, must have been quite understandable to Daniel, but the long record of happenings which had to transpire first must have led him to realise as never before that many

years were yet to pass before the great deliverance could come. It might well be that in this message Daniel realised the great truth that God will save Israel and all mankind, "whosoever will" not by patching up this very unsatisfactory present world, but by a resurrection from the dead to a new world, a world in which God Himself makes all things new. That is the clear implication of Chapter 12.

One wonders how this detailed and extremely lengthy statement of things to come got recorded. Daniel listened to all that Gabriel had to say but the circumstances of the interview, the grandeur and solemnity of the occasion, entirely preclude any idea that he wrote it down at the time—especially since he would have written with a stylus in cuneiform characters on a clay tablet, by no means an expeditious method of writing. We must here allow for the influence of the Holy Spirit, quickening Daniel's mind after the angel had left him, so that he remembered accurately every word and compiled a complete transcript of all that had been said.

So the failing hand of the old man traced the record of his last revelation. That it was to be for the benefit of future generations he no longer had any doubt. "I am come" Gabriel had told him "to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days." (Ch. 10. vs 14.). Therein lies a great principle of Divine revelation. Anxious as we may be to witness in our own time the fulfilment of "all things written" we must realise, as Daniel was led to realise, that God's time-scale is not as ours. We can study the prophetic Scriptures and witness the signs of the times with ardent zeal and heart-felt longing, but the best and most scrupulous of our conclusions cannot take into account all that is in the mind of God; only that which He has revealed, and He does not reveal all. Countless earnest Christians in past ages have been persuaded that Bible prophecy and contemporary events have joined together to point unerringly to their own time as the day of Divine intervention in human history for the final battle between good and evil; and none have actually witnessed the climax. But it will not be always thus. The time must surely come when the last generation of watchers has had revealed to it the last hidden secrets of God's design. Then the Clock of the Ages will strike twelve.

It behoves us all to be as sure of our faith and as fervent in our expectation as was

Daniel, and others like him. To live as though the end will come to-morrow, and yet be prepared to live out the span of natural life to extreme old age, undisturbed in faith and hope whether the outward signs point to the one or the other eventuality; that is the faith of Daniel and the faith God wants in us. "Though it tarry" cried Habakkuk "wait for it, for it will surely come; it will not tarry." So many in modern times have made shipwreck of their faith because of the failure of expectations. They could wait ten years, twenty years, thirty years, for the Kingdom, but they could not wait a lifetime. But the Creator Himself has waited through the entire span of human history and has never deviated one iota from that challenging statement of faith both in Himself and in man whom He made, uttered more than three thousand years ago "As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory". The thoughtful Christian viewing as dispassionately as he can the insane world in which he must perforce live to-day might be pardoned for thinking that the present order cannot possibly survive the next few years. If he is right, and the end of this Age is that much near, all Christians and all right thinking men everywhere have cause, knowingly or unknowingly, for rejoicing, for that climax means the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in manifest power over the nations. It means the end of cruelty and hate and injustice and oppression. It means the fulfilment of the inspired words of Zephaniah "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3. 9.). It means the time when "The Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him . . . He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." (Isa. 40. 10-11). It means the realisation of words spoken to John on Patmos "Behold, the dwelling-place 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 sighing, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21. 3-4). It means that every faithful Christian will live and reign with Christ for the thousand years, the while the "ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads . . . and sorrow and sighing shall

*flee away.*" (Isa. 35. 10.).

That is what it means if the world does perish by its own hand in our own time. And if not, if the evil vitality of this old order of things prolongs its life for a season and time, the end will still be the same and just as sure,

for it is written in the purposes of God and will surely come to pass. Like Daniel, we may have to wait longer than we expect and longer than we wish, but "*it will surely come; it will not tarry*".

*To be continued*

## **THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN**

*"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."* (Matt. 13. 33).

Despite its brevity, this parable enshrines one of the deepest of the truths concerning the Kingdom which Jesus Christ came to preach and to establish. We are inclined to place so much stress upon the preparation of the "people for God's Name" to be His instruments in the future Age of world conversion that we are liable to overlook another very essential work of preparation which also must make progress during this Gospel Age, and it is this aspect of the Kingdom of Heaven which is made prominent in the parable of the leaven. The Gospel Age has been set apart in the Divine Plan not only for calling and preparing the "Ministry of Reconciliation" which is to effect the work of writing Divine law in the hearts of men during the Messianic Age, but also to allow the leaven of Christian teaching to permeate society and prepare mankind for the demands that will be made upon it during that Age.

Note first the aptness of the allusion. The leaven is added to the meal and is necessary if the meal is to become good, wholesome bread. It does not of itself, however, convert the meal into bread. The fiery experiences of the baking process alone can do that, but the permeation of the mass by the leaven is essential before the baking may be commenced. There is a slow, invisible, nevertheless effective leavening of the dough which, when completed, allows the heat of the oven to do its beneficent work. So it is with the Kingdom, said Jesus. There is a preliminary stage in which the "raw material", so to speak, of that Kingdom is being acted upon by an influence similar to that of leaven upon meal, and results in the whole of that "raw material" being made ready for the experiences which will effect for it its ultimate destiny.

But is not leaven employed in the Scriptures as a symbol of sin? It is so employed when in Matt. 16. 6 Jesus warned his disciples

to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees". In this warning He used the same characteristic of leaven to describe the insidious subtlety of those who were like dead men's sepulchres, fair on the outside but inside full of dead men's bones. Again, Paul in 1 Cor. 5. 7, referring to a scandalous affair in the Corinthian church, urged that church to expel a certain openly profligate offender in the words "Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be . . . unleavened." Note that in this passage the picture is that of the sinner himself, remaining within the fellowship of the church, being the leaven which will be permeate the entire church with its influence, in this case a baneful influence. The individual's expulsion from the community was commanded in the words "Purge out therefore the old leaven".

The children of Israel at the Exodus were to purge their houses of leaven and to eat unleavened bread seven days. The idea here was evidently to symbolise their utter separation from all that was of Egypt and a new purity consequent upon their adoption into the family of God and their redemption when the destroying angel passed over the land. Although at this feast, the feast of the Passover, leaven was forbidden, it should be noticed that at the feast of Pentecost, seven weeks later, leaven had to be associated with the offerings. (See Lev. 7. 13; 23. 17.).

One may conclude, then, that leaven is used in allusion to its power of permeation, in symbol of both good and evil influences. In the case of the parable there should be no room for doubt. The Kingdom of Heaven is like this leaven, said Jesus; this is a feature of the Kingdom I am preaching, the Kingdom which I am commencing now and which will one day be worldwide.

What is the nature of this leavening work? It is not intended to convert the nations. That work is to be carried out during the Messianic Age. It is at the most a work of preparation, of laying the foundations of that greater work which shall once and for all abolish sin

in all its aspects and bring in everlasting righteousness.

Is there Scriptural evidence that such a work of preparation is to proceed during this Age? By all means there is. "Go ye into all the world," said Jesus, "and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16. 15.). "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness" (Matt. 24. 14.). And more personal to each of us "They may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2. 12.). This last Scripture gives the clue. There is a work to be done by the Church in the flesh, during this Age, which is not to be productive of immediate results, but will have its fruitage in the coming Age. Whilst the chief and foremost business of every Christian is the playing of his or her part in the calling and preparation of those who are fellow-workers in the body of Christ, there is also this secondary work amongst men in general which is likened to the influence of leaven—its results not immediately discernible, but none the less vitally necessary to the final work of the future.

Jesus Himself gave further instructions on this matter. "Ye are the salt of the earth," He said (Matt. 5. 13). Salt is a preservative. It must be intimately mingled with that which is to be preserved and it must retain its freshness to be efficacious. If the salt lose its savour, it is henceforth fit for nothing. We are the salt of the earth! It is very unfortunate that the expression has passed into an everyday proverb which implies that the "salt" of the earth are the "choice ones" of the earth, whereas Jesus meant nothing of the kind. His meaning is that by virtue of an intimate mingling with the people of the earth, His disciples by their conduct and teachings would be a preservative and wholesome influence in the world, maintaining a witness and an example of Kingdom standards, which, however unheeded at the time, would yet serve to save the world from utter depravity and make it ready in some small way for the coming Day and its standards. Noah and Lot were such preservative influences in their own days, preachers of righteousness in a world of unrighteousness.

"Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus (Matt. 5. 14). Something of a rather different nature than salt. We are to be an enlightening influence, a light that cannot be ignored even although men persist in shading their eyes from its brilliancy. The light of the world in a literal sense is of course the sun. Did Jesus

mean that our Christian life and witness should be as obvious a fact as the existence of the sun itself, so that, whether men hear or whether they forbear, they cannot deny the fact that there have been prophets amongst them? (Ezek. 2. 5.).

But Jesus has not finished with His disciples yet. A still more tremendous thought comes from His lips. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5. 14). We then are to be as a city set on an hill—impossible for us not to be in the public eye. To what extent do we approach to any attempt at fulfilling this ideal? The idea of a city is that of an ordered and regulated way of life; to be set on an hill adds the thought of a Divinely set and ordained way of life. Men, looking upon the Christian community upon earth, are to see it as a city set upon an hill—a compact community proclaiming and living by standards which have been given by Heaven and which are to be manifested to all men. Men may not acknowledge the authority of that city; they may avoid it in their travels and build their roads to swerve round the hill instead of going up and into the city; but they must always be conscious that the city is there, standing by a system of authority and rulership which one day it will have power to extend over the whole world.

So then, they who by virtue of their position as footstep followers of the Lord Jesus Christ have become as leaven in this world have the duty and privilege of working silently, unobtrusively, until the leavening process is complete and the world stands ready to be introduced to the reign of Christ in power. For two thousand years they will have been manifest to men as the salt of the earth, as the light of the world, as a city on an hill, and then at length, their work of witness completed, they will come forth in glory and power to fulfil their historic mission of world conversion. It is then that the fruit of the leavening work will be manifest. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11. 1). It is upon the basis of this "witness" that the greater invitation to the fountain of life will be based and the grand work commence. It is because men will have already heard and known—and seen—something of Kingdom standards that some of them will break out, as the prophet declares they will break out, into the rapturous words "Lo, this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isa. 25. 9.).

## A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

He came to us; and He need not have come. He had the whole creation of angelic realms in which to find satisfaction if He wished, countless multitudes of sinless angelic beings to do him homage and with whom He could have fellowship; but He left them behind. This earth was a dark place, dark with sin and wretchedness, its inhabitants violent, lustful, cruel; and they hated him. Yet He came.

*"His Father's house of light,  
His glory-circled throne,  
He left, for earthly night,  
For wanderings sad and lone.  
He left it all for me—  
Have I left aught for Thee?"*

That was why He came. He came for me, that I might be delivered from this dark abyss of sin, and rejoice in the glorious liberty of the children of God. He came for my fellows, too, that they might be rescued in like fashion. He came to establish the Father's Kingdom here on earth, that Kingdom which is already supreme in every other sphere of the Father's creation. He came to afford all men a full, fair, free opportunity of eternal life.

*"He breaks the power of reigning sin  
And sets the prisoner free.  
His blood can make the foulest clean;  
His blood avails for me."*

He came because He was the only one who could possibly come. He is the greatest in all creation and only the greatest can make the greatest sacrifice. And his sacrifice was the greatest. No creature in all heaven and all earth will ever be able to make so great a sacrifice. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.

*"Man of sorrows! What a name  
For the son of God, who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim!  
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"*

He came to tell men of his plans for their future happiness, how that even their killing of him will not frustrate his hold over them. For He comes again to bring them all to himself, as many as have not utterly extinguished their own capacity for repentance. And as assurance of that restoration. He has left his followers behind to go on telling men of the glorious Kingdom which will follow earth's dark night of sin, a Kingdom in which men will be drawn by every artifice in God's

armoury to repentance and reconciliation with him, walking along the way of holiness to full acceptance of salvation in Christ. For unto him will every knee on earth bow, as now does every knee in heaven.

*"One offer of salvation  
To all the world make known.  
'Tis Jesus Christ, the First and Last;  
He saves, and He alone."*

He came, and He comes again. Not now as a babe in a manger, but a glorious heavenly Lord, armed with all power in heaven and in earth. He comes to gather his Church to be with him, and only those who are watching for his appearing will share in that gathering. He comes revealed in the consuming fire of Divine judgment for the destruction of all those institutions of men which stand in the way of his incoming Kingdom. He comes in resplendent glory so that all men know that He has come, and at once begins to speak peace to the nations.

*"Down the minster aisles of splendour, from  
betwixt the cherubim,  
Through the wondering throng, with motion  
strong and fleet.  
Sounds His victor tread approaching, with a  
music far and dim,  
The music of the coming of His feet.  
He is coming, O my spirit, with His everlasting  
peace,  
With His blessedness, immortal and complete.  
He is coming, O my spirit, and His coming  
brings release.  
I listen for the coming of His feet."*

The angels are singing in the distance; there are just a few who can hear their song to-day. Later on all men will hear them and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, obtaining joy and gladness while sorrow and sighing flees away.

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son  
is given; and the government shall be upon  
his shoulder. And his name shall be called  
Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the  
Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."*

"I always put on my court robes when I enter my observatory, because when I study the stars I stand in the court of the King of Kings." (Tycho Brahe)

## A REST TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

*"We which have believed do enter into rest . . . there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."* (Heb. 4, 3 & 9.)

Most Christian people—except perhaps the young and the naturally energetic—are conscious at times of a desire for rest. Rest from the eternal conflict; a cessation of the tiring struggle against unrighteousness and injustice and every form of evil. It were unnatural were it not so, for the Christian life was always intended to be a conflict and a struggle, and where those things obtain there must be at times a desire for rest. The traditional Heaven of mediaeval days was always depicted primarily as a place of rest. The well-known—and probably completely unhistorical—story of the epitaph carved on the tombstone of the poor old worn-out charwoman whose life had been one of unending toil "*Gone to do nothing for ever and ever*" is well-known only because it delineates a real trait in many Christian characters, the longing for rest. The oft-expressed hope of the early Christians was for rest from the wickedness of this world; in those days they had much more justification than have we for weariness on that score. And the secret of the intense longing felt by many believers, of more devotional turn of mind, for their Lord's return to take them to be with Him, is largely their desire to be associated with Him in what they picture as an eternal rest.

But the writer to the Hebrews is not speaking of any kind of possible future rest to follow the toils of this life. He is speaking in the present tense and the rest into which we are invited to enter is one that is ours now, if we will. Here is a very real sense in which we can cease to strive and struggle, and enter a condition of complete rest, yet without forsaking in any degree that life of service and activity which is ours and should always continue to be ours while we have any talents or opportunities whatever to expend for Christ. This rest we are strongly exhorted to attain. "*Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest*" (vs. 11) is the word. A paradoxical statement, "labour" to "rest" but a profound truth lies behind the exhortation.

The world to-day knows no rest. "Peace, peace, but there is no peace" has become a truism. It is a condition of mind not to be envied. There is upon the earth distress of

nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking to the things coming upon the earth. So, said Jesus, would it be in the last days and to-day the word is true as never before. But Christians are to be a contrast to all this. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" is the Divine injunction and unless we can reach up to that level we are missing much of the real essence of Christian living. Faith has to play an important part in this; we have to develop a faith based upon a sure knowledge of God and His ways, a sure conviction that He is steadily working in the world of men to bring mankind to Himself. It is when we come to that realisation we can endure with greater confidence the many circumstances of life which would seem to give the lie to any assertion that the world will yet be saved from itself. On this faith, and in the quietude of this rest, is Christian character developed and God's Will done in our minds and hearts.

What then is this rest?

Before trying to answer the question, look back to the words in Hebrews 4. The writer is talking about Natural Israel at the time of the Exodus. They were plodding through the wilderness on the way to a Promised Land, but they were suffering all kinds of hardships and misfortunes meanwhile. They had a "rest" offered them; an entry into a land "*flowing with milk and honey*", a land that would gratify their fondest desires. After the rigour and perils of the wilderness their life in that Promised Land was to be indeed a "rest". But they never attained it. A later generation inherited the land; the generation that left Egypt with such high hopes and sojourned in the wilderness forty years never entered in. Why? Hebrews 4 gives the answer. "*They entered not in because of unbelief.*" (vs. 6.). That is a most amazing sequel to their pilgrimage. They had enjoyed every possible outward evidence of the Divine power and protection extended on their behalf—far more in a physical sense than we have to-day. The pillar of fire protected them by night and the cloud led them by day. The manna and the quails and the water from the rock all came at their times of greatest need. With an high hand the Lord delivered them from the Egyptians and brought them to Himself. What more could they want or expect? The Promised Land was in front of

them, waiting to be entered. True, there was fighting to be done, but there was the definite promise of victory. Why then the failure? "Because of unbelief." They sent the spies to search out the land. Joshua and Caleb returned with the heartening assurance "Let us go up, for we are well able to possess it", but they disbelieved, and murmured, and rebelled. They refused to go up and possess the land. So came the sentence "To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea." That is the penalty of unbelief, the wilderness. There are two kinds of wilderness; the wilderness *with* God and the wilderness *from* God. It is good for us if we are in the wilderness *with* God; there we can learn of Him and grow strong in His ways. It is hard for us if we find ourselves in the wilderness *apart* from God, but this is the penalty of unbelief.

So this rest is one into which we enter because of complete faith in and dependence upon God, and in this rest we find spiritual strength. It does not imply idleness or sloth; the vigorous activity of a full Christian life can be assiduously pursued in complete possession of this rest. The Bible itself gives us enough examples of that in its accounts of great things in early days; those historical narratives illustrate the various aspects from which we view this rest.

Consider the story of creation. Out of the chaos and clashing elements came the peace and calm of Eden. The Lord God created man and put him in the garden, and woman was brought to him. Then God entered into His rest, that seventh day on which He rested from all His works which He had made, a cessation of creative activity in relation to His Plan for mankind. Creation must still have continued, for God is ever a Creator, but at Eden He left His Plan for this earth to run its course, being confident and restful as to its outcome. That was the rest of *knowledge*. He knew that His Will would be accomplished and what He had purposed would come to pass. We too need the rest of *knowledge*. We *know* and therefore we are content.

Adam and Eve in the garden entered into a rest. They had the Divine commission to till the ground and reap its fruits, and that implied diligence and activity. They knew themselves bound to render worship and adoration to their Creator and observe the laws which had been revealed to them and that implied loyalty and obedience. But in this life they enjoyed a rest, the rest of *dependence*, dependence on God. We too need

the rest of dependence. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Noah in the days of the antediluvian world was told an unheard of thing, a thing that the wisdom of that world knew not of and could not credit. A flood that was to come would destroy that whole order of things but by the building of an Ark Noah could save himself and all who with him believed God. In the turmoil and confusion of that doomed world Noah achieved complete rest, the rest of *confidence*. In the power of that confidence he triumphed and was saved. So it may be with us. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." We must have the rest of *confidence*.

Abraham was called the Friend of God, but his life was, nevertheless, a stormy one and he was called upon to pass through many strange experiences. His faith was tested to the uttermost; yet the story of his life reveals a calmness and serenity which declares in no uncertain tones that his life was lived in a condition of rest with God. His was the rest of *obedience*. He was obedient because he believed, and that belief earned for him the honour of justification by faith. We also, if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are obedient, also are justified by faith and we also enter in to the rest which comes from *obedience*.

The first disciples of Jesus, between His death and the Day of Pentecost, were disturbed and perplexed, not knowing what to do, but when they gathered "with one accord into one place" and the Holy Spirit descended upon them, they one and all entered into rest. All the best of the lessons of past men's lives was built into their experience; their rest was one of knowledge, of dependence, of confidence, of obedience; in the power of that rest they were able to go forth in all boldness to preach the Word and become known eventually as the men who had turned the world upside down. They believed; therefore they entered into rest, and nothing could destroy that rest. That same rest is for us, if we also believe. It is complete and unassailable, based on our relationship with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Accepting Christ's finished work, at His hands, we enter into rest. This rest is our rightful inheritance; none can deprive us of it but we ourselves can throw it away. The Promised Land is before us; Jordan is held back; there is nothing in the way. There are

enemies in the land, seeking to destroy our rest, but "greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us" and we have nothing to fear—except unbelief. Except we believe,

we shall in no wise enter in.

*"Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."*

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## **"THEY SHALL NOT TASTE OF DEATH"**

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An examination of  
a perplexing Scripture

*"There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."* (Mark 9. 1.)

A strange statement, and one that has given rise to endless discussion in our own day, and probably in past days as well. The fact that the apostles "fell asleep" nearly two millenniums ago, but the Kingdom has not even yet been established, has encouraged the advancing of a number of explanations designed to make this text consistent with that fact. Thus it is suggested that the Transfiguration scene, which is recorded immediately afterward, was a vision symbolic of the coming Kingdom, and the fulfilment of these words. The fact that each of the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, places the Transfiguration record in conjunction with these words of Jesus does seem to indicate that they recognised a connection. Another suggestion, that the Variorum rendering "there be some of them that stand, which shall not taste of death", indicates that Jesus referred to those "standing" at the end of the Age who would witness the coming of the Kingdom hardly deserves consideration. But there is such a unanimity among the three men who recorded the words that we are justified in examining the text closely in an endeavour to discern more accurately just what Jesus did mean.

Whilst it is quite a reasonable deduction that the Transfiguration scene was intended to symbolise the Kingdom and hence could be that to which Jesus referred, it is hardly a complete explanation of the matter. What are the actual words? Luke says that some of them would not die before they had seen "the kingdom of God"; Mark, "the kingdom of God come with power", and Matthew, "the Son of man coming in his kingdom". Matthew and Mark probably heard Jesus speak the words; Luke must have got his version from one of the disciples, for he was not a disciple himself at the time, and the fact that his version agrees with Mark, added to the fact that Mark's Gospel shows signs of being generally more verbally correct than is Matthew's may

justify us in accepting Mark's form of words as representing what Jesus really did say on that occasion.

Our usual approach to this problem is to assume, at once, that the expression "kingdom of God in power" refers to Jesus' coming power and glory at His Second Advent, attempting then to reconcile this with the fact that all the disciples did "taste of death" before that event has taken place. It is thought now that a new approach to the question may be helpful.

This promise must have made a profound impression on the minds of the disciples. It was as definite an assurance as they had ever had from Jesus that they would live to see their hopes fulfilled. They ardently desired the Kingdom; they knew that the Kingdom was to be the reign of Messiah over the nations with Israel as the missionary people to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth, and they themselves to occupy key positions in that Kingdom. They attached sufficient importance to this promise to record it, years afterwards, in practically identical words in each of their Gospels. Is it not reasonable to think therefore that the fulfilment, if and when it did occur in their lifetime, as it was promised it should, would be prominently recorded as evidence for all subsequent readers that their faith was not founded on the sand? When, thirty-five years later, Peter looked back over his life and testified to the reality of the things he had believed and preached, there came to his mind this very occasion, and he stated, as setting the seal upon the truth of his words, "this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet., 1. 18)—the Mount of Transfiguration. And the whole tenor of that passage in Peter is one which seems to indicate his feeling that the fulfilment of the promise was a past event with him, not one that awaited the end of the Age for its accomplishment. Peter, writing in his old age, had already seen the Kingdom of God come with power, even as Jesus had promised him. That is the

impression we get from this passage in 2 Pet 1.

Is there then any record in the stories of the apostles that would seem to fulfil the words of Jesus? It is suggested that there is—a record familiar to us all. Peter, standing up with the eleven on the Day of Pentecost, quoted Joel's prophecy of the Kingdom and declared that it was even then being fulfilled before his hearers' very eyes. "This" he said *'is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh'.*" (Acts 2. 16-21). If we are honest with ourselves in the examination of this passage we shall have to admit that Peter was preaching as though the Kingdom was being set up in power there and then; the whole of the quotation, from vs. 17 to vs. 21, is Messianic and refers to the power of the Kingdom which is to be manifested to men at the end of this Age and the beginning of the next. Peter was very definitely offering Israel an opportunity to receive the Kingdom both in its spiritual and its earthly aspects at once, and if we look at vs. 19-21 of chapter 3, remembering that "when" in vs. 19 should be "that", this conviction is heightened. Israel, as we now know, did not respond nationally to that invitation; only a "remnant" did accept it: and in consequence the Call went to the Gentiles and the earthly Kingdom was postponed for two thousand years, "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11. 25). But that does not alter the fact that the Kingdom was offered to Israel at Pentecost and that Peter saw a very real sense in which the Kingdom had come "in power".

Now how can we define this sense in which the Kingdom did come to the apostles "in power"? Is there evidence in Scripture that such a thing was to be expected? Is there any sense in which it can be said that the Kingdom was already come at Pentecost and that the power of the Kingdom was then manifest?

There is such a sense, one with which we are all familiar. The Apostle Paul tells us that we, believers, have been "*delivered from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son*" (Col. 1. 13). Again, Hebrews exhorts us "*wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably*" (Heb. 12. 28). We which have believed have already entered the Kingdom, not in its aspect of outward glory and power, which does not come until the Messianic Age, but in an inward aspect which is none the less real and none the less "in power". The power of the kingdom *now* is

the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was that manifestation, seen at Pentecost by all men in the inspiration of the eleven speaking with tongues, "declaring the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2. 11.) that constituted the Kingdom in power and gave fulfilment to Jesus' words. To Peter and the other disciples, and to the multitudes of dwellers at Jerusalem who saw and heard them, the Kingdom of God was indeed "come with power".

John the Baptist preached, saying "*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*". He must have had this Pentecost aspect in his mind, quickened as he was by the Spirit, for he went on to speak of the Harvest of Wheat and Chaff, (Matt. 3. 12), a harvest that commenced at Pentecost and continued until the final burning of the chaff in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was captured and destroyed. Jesus said on one occasion "*the law and the prophets were until John; since that day the Kingdom of Heaven is preached and every man presseth into it*" (Luke 16. 16). Again He said "*from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt. 11. 12). In both cases the underlying idea is that strenuous endeavour and a determination to "fight the good fight of faith" would be required of all who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven in its spiritual phase, the phase which at that time was about to be opened to men. Every man who *does* gain entry does so in consequence of effort and hardship, like a soldier who storms a city. But both texts indicate that entrance into the Kingdom could be gained there and then; the consecrated disciple, having intelligently entered in the High Calling, had thereby entered the Kingdom in its hidden or veiled aspect. That is what Jesus must have meant when He said to the Pharisees "*the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation*"—(with outward show, as of a scene spread before one's eyes) "*neither shall they say 'Lo, here' or 'Lo, there', for behold, the kingdom of God is within you*". (Luke 17. 20). This Scripture cannot refer to the Kingdom in power at the "revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven" (2 Thess. 1. 7.), for men will then most definitely be able to say "Lo, here". The Kingdom will be plainly visible and all men will know it and see it. That text can only refer to this present Age, when the Kingdom, although real and in power—the power of the Holy Spirit—is hidden and veiled from men. "The Kingdom of God is within you" (The Diaglott rendering "God's Royal Majesty is among you" is not strictly correct.

"Royal Majesty" is not a correct translation, and *entos* can be equally "within you", in the sense of being inside an individual, or "among you" in the sense of being in the midst of a number of individuals.) Since Jesus was talking to a group of men, either meaning may have been in His mind or even both! What He really did say was a definite, convincing word "The Kingdom of Heaven is, at this present time, in the midst of all of you, unseen, unknown to men, but present in spiritual power of the Holy Spirit".

It is suggested therefore that Jesus' declaration to the effect that some of those around Him on that day would not die until they had seen the Kingdom of God come with power was fulfilled a few years later when on the Day of Pentecost the eleven disciples experienced, and the people around them witnessed, a display of Divine power of a nature that had never been known before. For the first time the power of the Holy Spirit, the power that sustains the Kingdom, was seen in operation commencing with the invitation to join

the spiritual phase of the Kingdom, continuing through the Age, completing that spiritual called company and glorifying its members by a change to heavenly nature, then going on to perfect a missionary nation, in fulfillment of God's promise to His ancient people, and finally calling all men to perfection by restitution processes to what is admittedly the outward power of the Kingdom, its manifestation in the Messianic Age. It is one Kingdom, commencing its operations at Pentecost with the Call of the Church and continuing into the time when the invitation of the "Spirit and the Bride" to come and take of the water of life freely goes out to all men. We are accustomed to thinking of the "kingdom in power" in terms of outward might and glory; we of all people should know that the greatest power is that which is unseen and the greatest glory that which is spiritual, and it is this power and glory which has been working in and through Christ's disciples from the days of St. Peter to the present day.

## A Thought for the Month

The Old Year is dying, and the New, with all its hidden secrets, is at the doors. Although the festive season which marks the end of each year is generally thought to be three months removed from the true date of our Saviour's birth in Bethlehem, there is yet a singular appropriateness in the fact that the angel's message and the story of the coming of the Light and the hope of the world should dwell specially upon the mind at the ending of the old year, with all that it has seen, and the coming of the new with its problems as yet unsolved, its difficulties as yet unfaced, but also—and let us not forget this—its victories yet to be won.

From time immemorial men have burned the Yule log and set up the fresh young fir tree—the Christmas tree so familiar to us—in commemoration of this perennial renewing of Nature's cycle. What matter that these observances had a pagan origin, that the legendary death and resurrection of old-time idolatrous deities was symbolised by these things? Do not we as Christians hold to the self-same belief, stripped of much of its crude materialism? Was it not Christ that died, yea, even that is risen again, and now sitteth on the right hand of God to intercede for us? If Christmas has no other lesson for us, it will

serve us well if it causes us to turn our thoughts more definitely to the essential basis of our faith and the whole purpose of our life in Christ.

In the year now closing we have made mistakes. Let us admit the fact. We have come short of the standard set before us and in many ways we have failed to glorify our Father in Heaven as we ought to have glorified Him. The least we can do is be honest about it and admit that we have been unprofitable servants. Yet there have been victories. There has been a sanctifying power operating within us; the Holy Spirit has been at work. In some respects at least we have overcome. The care of the Good Shepherd is still ours and if in the depths of our hearts we sincerely desire to be his disciples then the year about to dawn will assuredly witness continued progress toward the heavenly Kingdom. The Old Year, with its record of failures and victories, is past, like the page of a book that has been turned. The New Year, with its possibilities and potentialities, for good or for ill, for declension earthward or ascension heavenward, is before us. We are a spectacle to men and to angels; all creation is watching us. How can we fail God now?

## LEICESTER CONVENTION 1957

The annual convention of Midland Fellowships was held in Leicester. Although there seemed to be fewer visitors from north and south this year, numbers were similar to previous years due to the good representation of Midland districts. Our thanks are due to those who worked to prepare and carry through the plans of the gathering. One could hardly help noticing the busy catering department which provided fine meals and served them most attractively. Passing to the "upper room" we were greeted with a warm handshake and offered a hymn book, a token of the loving service rendered by the stewards in many little ways. Before taking our seats, we perhaps lingered at the varied assortment of books and cards on the stall or maybe enjoyed a quiet chat with a brother or sister whom we had not seen for some months or even years. How refreshing to exchange experiences and speak one with another of the Lord's Word and of His continual goodness in our daily lives! Our informal fellowship culminated on Saturday afternoon at 3.15 when Bro. G. E. Chilvers (*Atherstone*) as chairman of the convention heartily welcomed us, reminding us of a few thoughts respecting the way we "look at things". He reflected upon God's observance of Creation, that it was good; upon the world in Noah's day, that it was evil; our looking for the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally he spoke of our attitude in attending the convention; if we had gathered in the spirit of expecting a blessing, then we should certainly receive one.

The first address, entitled "*Herein is love*", was given by Bro. John Thompson (*Wallasey*) centred around 1 John 3. 4. The unique properties of iron illustrate the magnetic force of God's love. How can sinful men look upon a Creator dwelling in light inaccessible? We were bidden to turn our eyes upon the God who at so great a cost had redeemed men by giving His dearly beloved Son. It was God's great love that inspired our love for Him, for He made the first move by loving us. (1 John 4. 10). Jesus in telling the story of the prodigal son, showed by the father's yearning love, God's attitude toward men. The lavish welcome given to the wayward son rightly portrays God's gift of the best that He could give. Paul prayed that his converts might know the love of Christ because it is that love

which constrains and draws us on towards Him. Jesus' love prompted Him to lay aside His heavenly glory in order that He might live and die upon earth to redeem men from their fallen condition. John tells us that "*having loved his own . . . he loved them unto the end.*" (John 13. 1). How true this was in those closing hours in the upper room as He washed the disciples feet! It was suggested in closing that we read through 1 Cor. 13 with a view to seeing God's loving character reflected in every verse.

On Saturday evening Bro. H. W. Burge (*Coventry*) spoke on "*The pathways of the just.*" We were reminded of the varieties of natural pathways, such as rough and rugged or smooth. Care and skill are required to negotiate them and travelling produces wear and tear. We traverse a pathway to reach a goal; similarly with our spiritual pathway. Psa. 17. 5 was quoted and emphasis placed upon our need to seek wisdom from God for our daily walk.

*Jacob's* life had been a mixture of spiritual heights and depths of the lower nature. When 78 years old we find him travelling to his uncle's home and asking God for the things which he needed for his journey. (Gen. 28. 20, 21). God answered that prayer of faith and sealed His promise by bringing Jacob back to the land of his fathers. *Noah's* life also was a pathway of faith, and unto him was committed the covenant that God would never again smite the earth. Each recurring season fulfils that promise. Israel's journey through the wilderness is a wonderful example of *guardianship*. The Lord kept Israel as the apple of His eye. He does not always lead His people by direct paths, nor let them see more than one step of the way ahead. But He knows and loves and cares. He sees the deviations and difficulties of the pathway and hears His children's cries. He provides *daily strength* (Deut. 33. 25.) and permits various reverses and experiences in our pilgrimage to promote growth. Halts along the journey are as necessary as the pauses in music, and help us to recognise the source of life's refreshing springs. (Psa. 27. 14). Times of waiting are for the cleansing and the mellowing of our characters for God's service. The Christian life must also *progress* onward, looking forward with hope and upward with confidence. Believing *prayer* brings every

grace of the spirit into active, healthy exercise and supplies refreshing vigour. Whether in prosperity or adversity we must pray for both: quickening and sustaining grace. "I know whom I have believed" wrote the aging apostle (2 Tim. 1. 12). As the shades of eventide fell Paul was full of calm assurance as he saw the gleam of heavenly light beyond. His faith had stood the tempest and now he saw life's objective accomplished. A Christian lives in deeds, not years, and the pathway of fidelity is straightforwardness. (Rev. 2. 10). Jesus set his face like a flint in adamant determination. We too must endure to the end, for here is the time of the cross; eternity is the time for the crown.

At the first session on Sunday morning many helpful lessons were drawn from a passage of scripture in Matthew 21, by Bro. Aian Fletcher (London) in a discourse entitled "Fruits of the Kingdom". As he retold the story of the "vineyard let out to husbandmen" the speaker showed how those universal principles applied to our own day. God gave Israel of His best and they were proud of His favours. But His simple laws had been elaborated until God's Word had become obscured. Their traditions had become a barrier between Israel and its God. Their history reflected more failures than successes in righteousness. They believed that as custodians of Divine truth they were superior to the other nations. They had forgotten that God took them as serfs to make of them a great nation. There is a great parallel between the history of Israel and the Church. As the great blaze of light of the Reformation faded, further reforming work had to be done, producing divisions and sects just as it had among the Jews. Thus had God's work continued through the ages to develop His people. The fruitage of character is brought forth in this age. Evidence of fruit will be shown as it was in Jesus by His great love and compassion for all men. The love of God is broad and high and deep; and it cannot shut itself away from all the trouble in the world. The changes in our characters are being made now in order that we shall be fitted to inherit God's eternal kingdom.

In the afternoon three Midland brothers briefly addressed the convention. First came Bro. S. Dilks (Blaby) whose subject was "Our blessed hope", taken from Titus 2. 13. The age of persecution may have ended but the wily Adversary was still trying to destroy the "Seed of promise". In an age of ungodliness we especially needed to be alert for worldly

desires. The hope of the Second Advent should purify us from weaknesses of the flesh like intolerance, and cause us to love our brethren fervently. (1 John 3. 2, 3.). Such enjoy sound teaching, wholesome and edifying doctrine, which promotes spiritual health. For those who do, Peter says there is an incorruptible inheritance which fadeth not away. (1 Pet. 1. 3, 4.). Thus, begotten of a lively hope, the child of God does nothing for vain glory but with pure motives and humble mind he is zealous for the will of God. (Phil. 2. 12, 13.).

The second talk, under the heading "Obey My voice" (Exodus 19. 5) was given by Bro. D. Nadal (Melton Mowbray). Obedience is a basic principle through the Scriptures. Its absence produced the first human rebellion. Abraham's acceptance of God's will through sacrifice brought friendship with God. Israel's favours from the Lord were dependant upon their hearkening to His voice. Humble prayer and willing obedience are prerequisites for real revival. It was obedience to His Father's will by which Jesus gave salvation to all mankind (Rom. 5. 15). Our Master illustrated obedience by the two men who built houses on sand and rock, emphasising that obedience builds character to stand against the storms of life. We need to listen carefully to the voice of the Lord above the noise of the world. He gave specific commands,—to love the brethren (John 13, 34, 35) and to witness (Mark 16. 15). The history of the early Church shows that only implicit obedience brings spiritual vitality through close relationship with God. (1 John 3. 22-24).

The final exhortation was to "Hold Fast the beginning of our confidence" (Heb. 3. 14). Bro. N. Wood (Rugby) said that when our thoughts are fixed on Him whom we profess to follow then we enjoy such a faith as that. It is confidence based on understanding as expressed in Psa. 34. We love Him because He first loved us. When we were spiritually begotten through that love we were freed from the law of sin and death. From then on we develop a love and trust because God "hath quickened our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". (1 Cor 4. 6). A lack of such trust produces difficulties in the Christian life, and causes us to be interested in the cares of this life which readily choke the Gospel of Christ.

The evening meeting commenced with a brief prelude of praise and then came what was to be the last address of this all too short

convention. In his own majestic delivery, Bro. B. J. Drinkwater (*Birmingham*) spoke on "*The Eternal Purpose*". The speaker introduced his theme by quoting the well-known passage in Eph. 3. 11. He stressed the point that it was a definite and precise plan, not a mere haphazard venture, a plan devised by God to span the Ages leading to a definite end and consummation. Quoting Rev. 4. 11 the point was emphasised that God created all things according to His good pleasure and for His glory. (Isa. 46. 9, 10). But though it was God's purpose, it was made to centre in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3. 11). A fine point was here made by a good question; how could an eternal purpose centre in Christ Jesus if He had no existence till born of Mary some two thousand years ago? The outworking of such a purpose necessitated His existence from before its inception. Prov. 8. 22-30 was introduced to show by the personification of Divine Wisdom that He who later came to earth existed before its creation as One who was "by Him".

Thus the first stage of the plan as related to the earth and its intended ruler went into effect. But man fell into sin and death; this necessitated the descent to the earth of Him who had created it. At His birth the angels sang for joy because a further stage of the Purpose was going into effect. The due time for Him to be born had come. (Gal. 4. 4). Grown to manhood He surrendered Himself to do God's Will, a thing with which God

declared Himself on two or three occasions "well pleased". This had been included in God's purpose before the world began.

God planned His return from Heaven to complete the work begun by His death, ordaining that by Him the world should be judged in righteousness, and that eventually every knee should bow at the Name of Jesus to the glory of God the Father. In the meantime God predetermined that Jesus should be the firstborn among many brethren for whom He had gone to prepare a place, and for whom He prayed that they might be with Him to behold His glory.

All these things were parts of one eternal purpose, by means of which all things in heaven and earth should be reconciled and be brought back into harmony with the Divine Will, every knee bowing obedience to Jesus' blessed Name.

The happy faces whose owners had entered the convention almost gaily earlier in the day or the previous day were now a little solemn. The moment had come to wish each other "God be with you till we meet again". The feet which had ascended the stairs with springy stride were now loath to make their way down again. But partings must come and these brief periods of refreshing are provided by the Lord to give new incentive and strength to "Press on". What we had learned while together must now be adapted to our daily living in the world.

## The Poison Wind

Professor David Brunt, F.R.S., in "*Climate and Human Comfort*" makes an observation which throws an interesting sidelight on the "vehement east wind" of Jonah 4. 8. He says: "If a man is exposed to wind of just over 11 m.p.h., at a temperature of 110 degrees F. and relative humidity 42 per cent., his body temperature can remain normal so long as he sweats at the rate of 2 pints per hour. If he stops sweating, he will thus be exposed to conditions in which radiation and convection heat the body, while there is no evaporative loss of heat from the skin. His body temperature will then rise, and he will die of heat-stroke. This appears to be the explanation of the deaths from the Simoom, the hot dry Poison Wind of Arabia, in which whole parties of men have perished together."

These climatic conditions are just those

which are experienced in Mesopotamia. The account in the Book of Jonah states that a "vehement east wind" sprang up, and the sun "beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die". No dweller in the cooler hill country of Palestine could have imagined such a technically accurate incident as this, for there is no "poison wind" in Palestine. This is but one of the many unnoticed details that confirm the historical accuracy of the Book of Jonah.

The Rev. Wigram, who lived in this same locality not many years ago as the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Nestorian Church, adds parallel testimony in his book "*The Cradle of Mankind*" (1936), page 340. He says:

"On the road from Amadia to Mosul in the summer it is often 120 degrees in the shade.

By day the heat is very trying, and there is a real danger occasionally of that strange phenomenon, the 'Sam'. This is apparently a very small whirlwind, akin to those which cause the 'dust-devils' common enough in the land at all times, but composed of intensely heated air, flavoured often with sulphurous fumes. A man struck by it simply collapses, and unless prompt attention can be given to him he dies in a few minutes . . . The natives not unnaturally refer to it as a poison wind. . . A British Consul has told the writer how

on one occasion, turning to speak to his kavass who was riding a few yards behind him, he suddenly felt the hot blast and smelt the sulphurous fumes; while the kavass collapsed and fell from his horse as if he had been shot."

The Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, who travelled these lands in the year 1296 A.D., tells of this same type of wind suffocating sixteen hundred horsemen and five thousand footmen belonging to the King of Kirman (a district of Persia). "Not one escaped", he says, "to carry the tidings to their lord".

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