

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

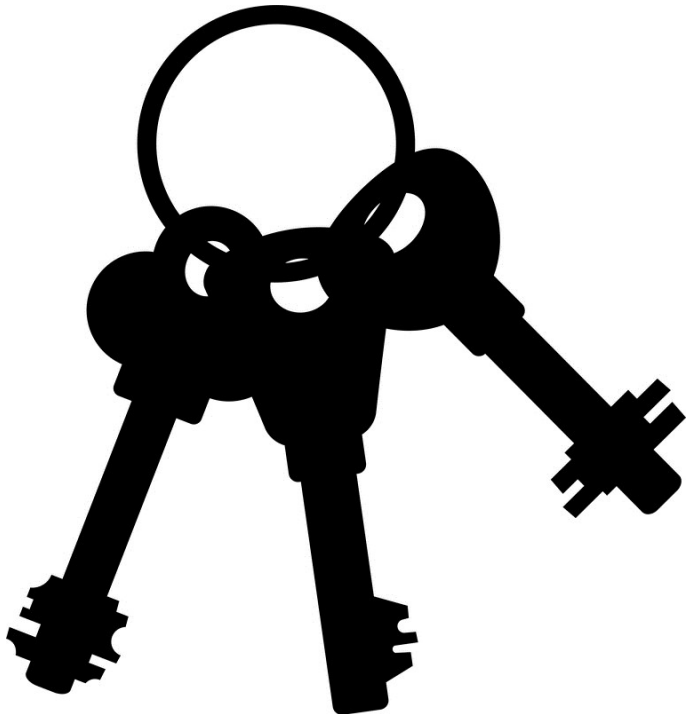
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Matt. 16. 19 (RSV) *“I will
give you the keys of the
kingdom of heaven.”*



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV).

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.
Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Keys are an integral part of modern life. We have keys for our homes and cars. Forgetting or losing our keys can be one of life's little frustrations. I am sure many of us remember ourselves or a robust brother or sister being posted through a fanlight that had been left ajar, to gain access to the family home. Think of the time we can waste looking for a key that was put somewhere safe for a moment and that we can no longer recall where that safe place is.

The Bible, the word of truth, holds many a key to life, whether it be to explain the existence of God, the history of the ancient world, the plan of God as well as how to live a godly life in this present uncertain and imperfect world.

Keys in Biblical times could be wooden. However from the days of ancient Egypt keys of iron or bronze have been discovered. One early mention of keys appears in the period of the judges and appears in Judges 3 in the time of Othniel and Ehud.

Recently the Great Pyramid in Egypt has been in the news. It has been scanned by some experts who have identified a gap or void above the gallery. This pyramid has fascinated historians and tourists for thousands

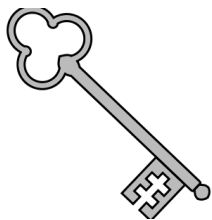
of years. It can be viewed as a sign that God exists in that the builders must have been informed by God as how to build such a huge structure so long ago without the methods that are used for the last 100 years in many a metropolis from New York to Dubai.

Jesus received the keys of David from his Father and appointed Peter to begin the work he had started from Pentecost. We also can be little keys opening up to and reminding others of those we come into contact with of the precious scriptures, as we endeavour to assist in the ministry of reconciliation.

Peter had a large role in the days of the early church and Peter like Paul travelled around the Roman world preaching and also writing to encourage those 'of the way' mainly among the Jewish peoples opening up the gospel like he did for the Roman centurion called Cornelius.

Zechariah was one of the prophets in Israel after the 70 years of exile in Babylon. Such books have left us with prophecies regarding the end times and give us keys to understand things that have happened in recent centuries that were prophesied and things that are in our future.

Therefore every Christian can be glad because of what has been opened unto them.



We could interpret all apparent strife,
And for life's mysteries could find the key.

Poems of Dawn

Readers of the last issue regarding 100 years since the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and 50 years since Israel took control of Jerusalem will note that Donald Trump officially recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital on 9 December 2017.

Readers will note that the final article of the this first issue of the year is on the book of Zechariah. Some readers may recall this article appeared in the September/ October 2012 issue. The plan is to repeat the series from the 1990s.

Magazine content. What is published is believed to have a wide interest, but everything printed may not necessarily be the opinion of the editor and his colleagues.

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shalt 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 judgement 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 is the prophecy which gave inspiration for our Lord’s word to Peter and those concerning himself.

Shebna and Eliakim are known 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 fore-view 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 will I 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 this, Jesus Christ, who is to be 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 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 flagons*" (Isa. 22. 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 (Isa. 22. 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 Isaiah 22. 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 (Isa. 22) 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 government...there shall be no end...and upon his kingdom*" (Isa. 9. 7) and the noble words of Psalms 110 come to 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; 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 reap 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 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 at 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 might be partakers of the divine nature...*" (2 Pet. 1. 4) 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.

Selected

The Ministry of Reconciliation

"My flesh I will give for the life of the world!"

Often do we interpret these words in terms of His crucifixion and death. But Jesus did also consciously fulfil the prevision of Isaiah: "He poured out his life unto death." For three and a half years the life of Jesus was given, in every possible sense, that the world might have more life. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

This is the call of the Church now, and in this Age. Our mission holds something more than a study of Divine philosophy, a growth in the knowledge of Scripture history and prophecy, a waiting for future glory and felicity. It is to give life that others might have life. It is to offer life **now**, as Jesus offered life **then**. True, we cannot heal diseases by a wave of the hand, produce food from stones wherewith to feed the hungry, drive out demons of hate, fear and all evil by verbal command—but, stay—is it true that we cannot do these things? Is there nothing that we can do for a sick or suffering one that will ease their lot and perchance assist them in their recovery; no power at all to relieve some little part of the hardship on those who suffer physical want in this unfriendly world; no word that can be fitly spoken to lift the mind of someone bound in the "bonds of iniquity" to higher and nobler ideals, and thus at least commence to cast out the demons that possess them? If we can do any of these things, in however little degree, we shall be doing, in our own small way, that to which our Lord Jesus devoted a great part of His life. And we are on safe ground when we find that "as He was, so are we, in this world."

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HEROES OF FAITH

It is a remarkable fact that although many of the Old Testament “heroes of faith” were men who attained exalted places in the affairs of this world, the men that live most in Israeli history as those who profoundly influenced the nation moved in humbler walks of life, and were men of the desert rather than of the court. If we were asked to name the ten most prominent men between Abraham and Christ, we would probably designate Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon, Daniel and John the Baptist. Of these ten men the first three, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were wealthy and powerful “sheiks,” to use the modern word, rich in possessions and servants, accustomed to command respect from those amongst whom they lived, by virtue of their influential position as well as by their integrity and uprightness of character. Four more, Joseph, David, Solomon and Daniel were statesmen, presiding over the affairs of empires, and holding the lives and destinies of multitudes in their hands. The other three, Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist, were men of the desert, witnesses for the holiness and supremacy of God, standing for His laws and His kingdom at times when it seemed that unless such prophets did arise, all would be lost.

Is it not noteworthy that these three last are the ones associated in vision with the coming of the King and His Kingdom? Moses prefigured the greater Prophet that should arise; Elijah the evangelists of this Kingdom; John was the Herald of the King Himself. In the vision on the Mount of Transfiguration it was Moses and Elijah who appeared in company with the transfigured Jesus, and our Lord Himself declared that John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets. Is there not some intimation here that God takes His rulers of the next Age, not from courts and palaces, but from the deserts and caves of the earth? There it is that the best training is to be had to the end that God’s ministers of the Millennial Age may be merciful and sympathetic ministrators (ministers or administrators) of Divine blessing.

Of course this does not mean that the Ancient Worthies, “princes in all the earth,” will in actual fact be recruited entirely from those who in their first life were prophets of the desert. Men like Joseph and Daniel, who spent their lives in a blaze of public service and power in idolatrous courts will be invaluable for the administration of Millennial conditions. From a

natural point of view, the entire company of Ancient Worthies will include men of probably every possible walk in life and variety of experience, and in that fact will lie the peculiar aptitude of this company of men to rule the world in righteousness and peace. From the spiritual point of view, however, it is certainly appealing to think that in Scripture illustrations and symbolism, it is the men of the desert—Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist—who specially represent for us the ruling class of the Kingdom.



THE KEYS OF TOMORROW

*You're groaning today 'neath a burden of care;
'Tis more than your sad, fainting spirit can bear.
Don't seek from the future new trouble to borrow,
But leave in Christ's hand the keys of tomorrow.*

*Your way may be clouded, your future concealed;
And scarcely the present is clearly revealed;
'Twill strengthen in weakness and comfort in sorrow,
To leave in Christ's hand the keys of tomorrow.*

*Don't take anxious tho't for your raiment and food,
Your Father will give you whatever is good,
No lines of despair on his brow will e'en furrow,
Who leaves in Christ's hand the keys of tomorrow.*

*Then lift up your head, tho' your eyelids are wet,
The clouds may be dark, but the sun's shining yet;
Trust fully in Jesus and banish your sorrow,
And leave in His hand the keys of tomorrow.*

Poems of the Way

TIMES AND SEASONS

7. The Period of the Judges (Part a)

The Book of Judges records happenings in Israel during the period between the Entry into the Land under Joshua and the accession of King David. During this time the people were ruled by the “Judges”. The English term is something of a misnomer; the Hebrew word really denotes a counsellor, a kind of tribal Elder. It is true that such justice as was done in those turbulent days was usually administered by the current “Judge” but in practice he was as much a military leader as a civil functionary. One very popular misconception is that the Judges ruled in strict succession over the entire country, rather like a dynasty of kings, but research shows that this was not the case. A particular judge’s influence usually extended over one part of the land, sometimes in the north, sometimes south, sometimes east, rarely over the whole. Not infrequently more than one judge was functioning at the same time in different areas. These facts make it impossible to assess the length of the period of the Judges by merely adding together the years of their judgeships as was formerly done.

Another common mistake is to assume that the events recorded in the Book of Judges followed each other in the order in which they are written, that it is a strictly chronological history of the times. In fact it is a collection of quite separate stories of happenings in various parts of the country at quite different times and the Book itself offers very little guidance as to the precise order in which they occurred. Some reference framework from outside the Book has to be found against which these stories can be set in their proper positions.

The first element in such a framework is the statement in 1 Kings 6.1 to the effect that King Solomon founded the Temple at Jerusalem in the four hundred and eightieth year after the Exodus from Egypt. The practice of chronologists of recent centuries to add together the lengths of the periods, which produced a total of nearly six hundred years, led to doubts being cast upon the verity of this statement. This difficulty has been felt throughout the Age, and it has been pointed out that most of the early Christian writers make no mention of it and on this account it has even been suggested that it is a late interpolation. There is no evidence of this, but there is always the possibility.

Fortunately however, there is now no need to rely on the 1 Kings 6.1 text to establish the length of this period. One of the older elements of uncertainty was the date of the Exodus, which a century ago was thought most likely to have been at the time of the 19th Egyptian dynasty, in the 13th century B.C., but during this present century the combined results of increasing knowledge of Egyptian history and the excavation of cities destroyed by Joshua have established that it was in fact during the 18th dynasty, and that Amen-hotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, round about 1450 B.C. Since the time of Solomon's accession is also known with only a few years doubt as about *980 B.C. it follows that the 480 years of 1 Kings 6.1 is satisfactorily verified by independent history.

It remains therefore to test this position by fitting the narrative of the Book of Judges into this framework of 480 years. The only time feature that is given is the statement in Judges 11.26-28 that the conflict between Jephthah and the Ammonites was three hundred years after the entry into the land. But the possible arrangement and permutations of all the other events to fit whatever period is selected as the time of the Judges is almost endless and largely dependent upon personal opinion, in the absence of chronological indications. And in all the various solutions which have been put forth for generations past, one important factor appears to have been overlooked or at least unheeded. This is that the entire history of the period appears to be one of incessant conflict with neighbouring peoples, invading and pillaging the land. One is led to enquire why the nations and tribes of the Middle East should have been in such a constant state of turmoil. The answer is to be found in what might be called the political background of Canaan during these four centuries. Knowledge of that might go far to explain those constant incursions of alien peoples into Israel.

During Moses' early life the lands of Canaan and Syria were under the iron control of Egypt. The warlike Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty maintained Canaan as a buffer state against Asiatic aggression. With



the death of Thutmose III, the Pharaoh who “sought Moses’ life” and who died eight years or so before Moses returned from Midian, the rising empire of Mitanni on the Upper Euphrates—more or less modern Kurdistan—wrested the power from Egypt and began to control the area. When Joshua’s forces crossed Jordan the Mitannians were dominant in the north. But thirty years later they were dispossessed by the Hittites, a rising power emanating from what is now modern Turkey. There always had been Hittite settlements and colonists in Canaan but now they had full political control. This state of affairs continued for a century and then Egypt, perhaps having recovered somewhat from the disastrous consequences of the Exodus, invaded Canaan to do battle with the Hittites. The two armies fought each other to a standstill at the battle of Qadesh and the net result was a treaty of friendship between the contending parties which ensured a measure of peace in the major part of the country for about another century, to the year 1200 B.C. From then on, until the days of David two centuries later, there subsisted throughout the Middle East what has been called “the times of confusion”, in which no great power was dominant anywhere and intermittent invasions, wars and transient conquests were common. The effect of this on the national life of Israel is well illustrated by the sad comment of the compiler of “Judges”, several times repeated, “*in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes*”.

It is only during the last century that detailed knowledge of this empire of Mitanni has been established, but now that it is known, one of the most obscure narratives in the Book of Judges can be explained, and an additional confirmation of the date of the Exodus obtained. The first foreign oppression, following Israel’s first apostasy soon after the death of Joshua, was when the Lord “*sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years*” (Jud. 3.8). No commentator or scholar has ever yet hazarded a guess at the identity of this king with the terrifying name, but the knowledge of the short supremacy of Mitanni over Canaan solves the enigma. “Mesopotamia” is the Greek form of the Hebrew Aram-naharaim, meaning “Aram of the two rivers”. This was the ancient name of the territory between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris which at a later date became the empire of Assyria. This was the area occupied by the empire of Mitanni in Joshua’s day. This king Chushan-rishathaim was one of the kings of Mitanni who extended his sway over

Canaan and was then defeated and pushed back by Othniel, as related in Judges 3. Since Mitannian influence in Canaan endured for only a century, and came to an end thirty-five years or so after Israel entered the land, the date of the Exodus is confirmed within a very few years independent of Bible chronology. The Mitannian king overthrown by the Hittites was Mattiwaza; his predecessor Tushratta could quite likely be the one referred to in Judges as Chushan-rishathaim, and since the sister of Tushratta was married to Pharaoh Amen-hotep III, who was reigning while Joshua was conquering Canaan, everything seems to fit in.

So Joshua died, probably twenty years or so after the entry, the people forgot God, violated the covenant, and were in consequence allowed to fall under the dominion of the Mitannians for eight years. Othniel, the nephew of Caleb, emerged as a military leader and engaged the enemy in combat. At precisely the same time, so far as ascertained history can show, the Hittites attacked the Mitannians from the north and defeated them. It looks very much as though they were caught between the Hittites in the north and Joshua in the south; at any rate, they were expelled from Canaan and “*the land had rest forty years*”.

During this period several notable events occurred. First of all came the interlude of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was the son of Rahab of Jericho and Salmon prince of the tribe of Judah. He must therefore have been born within a few years of the Entry. Elimelech and Naomi, in the story of the Book of Ruth, emigrated at much the same time into Moab because there was famine in Israel. If there was famine in Israel it was because Israel had apostatised and broken the Covenant, otherwise under its terms freedom from famine was guaranteed. This therefore must have been the apostasy following the death of Joshua which led to the eight years’ oppression of Chushan-rishathaim; during that time Naomi was in Moab. She came back to Canaan with Ruth because “*she had heard...that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread*” (Ruth 1.6), which means that the people had returned to the Lord and were keeping the Covenant—obviously this was the time of “rest” under Othniel. So the story of Ruth and Boaz fits in about forty to fifty years after the Entry during the time of Othniel the first Judge.

Twenty years or so earlier, perhaps just after the death of Joshua, must be placed the story of Micah and his graven image, recorded in Judges 17 &

18. A certain Ephraimite named Micah had set up an idol in his house and instituted a form of idolatrous worship. To him there came a young Levite from Bethlehem who was engaged as a kind of family priest. In the course of time there passed that way a party of men from the tribe of Dan, whose territory lay in the south-west near the sea. Because the Danites could not effectually dislodge the native inhabitants they were seeking another part of the country in which to dwell. They persuaded the Levite to come with them, complete with idol and all accessories, to be their own High Priest in their new abode, which came to be in the extreme north of the country. Thus was instituted a centre of idolatry which remained in Israel right up to the time of the captivity. The point of the story is that this Levite was a grandson of Moses. Although in the A.V. of Judges 18.30 he is named as Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, this is because the Jews in later times substituted Manasseh for Moses with a special mark in the Hebrew to indicate that Moses was in the original—this to dissociate the revered name of their founder with the disgraceful conduct of his grandson. So the descendants of Moses were priests of idolatry in Dan until the Captivity seven hundred years later.

At a later time, but still probably before the death of Othniel, came the civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin was all but annihilated. Although no note of time is given in the account in Judges 19-21 it is evident that it must have been soon after the beginning, since only six hundred men of Benjamin were left after the fighting and no women or children, yet by the time of Solomon the tribe was back to its normal strength. Because of a scandalous proceeding in the Benjamite town of Gibeah, the rest of the tribes made war against them having first asked counsel at the house of God—the Tabernacle where Phinehas the grandson of Aaron was High Priest (Jud. 20. 18, 28). In the upshot the slaughter of Benjamin was so extensive that special measures had to be taken to avoid the tribe completely dying out from Israel. All this at a time when “the land had rest” and the nation was professedly obeying the laws of the Lord; the story is a biting commentary on the decline of Israel’s high standards inculcated at Sinai little more than a century previously.

There now ensues that dreary repetition of national disasters prefaced each time by the monotonous refrain “*and the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD...*” (Jud. 3.12) in each case allowed them to become subject to their enemies until they repented and

turned to him. Then He raised up a deliverer. Othniel was the first such deliverer and he saved them from the Mitanni king; but Othniel died probably about seventy years after the Entry, at say about 1340 B.C., and Phinehas the High Priest, grandson of Aaron, must have died very soon after. Now there was no one left who had participated in the stirring events of the crossing of Jordan and the conquest of the land; the Israelites were intermarrying with the people of the land and serving their gods and all the high ideals of the generation that survived the Exodus were being forgotten. And at this stage the old enemies, Moab, Ammon and Amalek, staged a concerted attack in the southern part of the country and Israel came under the heel of the Moabites for eighteen years.

Chapter 3 tells the story. Israel repented and cried unto the Lord. God raised them up a champion, Ehud of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe they had so recently all but annihilated, and he raised a force of men and successfully routed the enemy, so successfully that Ch. 3. 30 says the land had rest for eighty years. Although not hinted at in the Bible account, this may very well have been partly because at this period Egypt had embarked upon a determined attempt to overthrow the Hittite power in the north, an attempt in which Egypt was only partially successful, and although the theatre of operations did not involve the southern tribes, it may well be that the peoples to the east who had formerly caused trouble, the Moabites and Ammonites and so on, were keeping themselves quiet and out of the way.

But although there was relative peace in Judah, Benjamin and the tribes to the south, the situation was different in the north, where the inconclusive war between Seti I and Rameses II of Egypt and the kings of the Hittites continued to rage, despite treaties of peace and apparent agreement. The disturbed state of Syria had to be reflected in the fortunes of the northern tribes, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, and this is where the oppression and succeeding defeat of Jabin the King of Canaan is most likely to be placed. Jabin was almost certainly a Hittite vassal king reigning in Hazor; his territory lay in the front line of the Hittite defences. With the Egyptians attacking from the south and Israel in possession in the south he probably recognised little difference between the two peoples. In any case the possession and occupation of the northern tribes' territory gave him at least a useful buffer state between himself and the Egyptians, and thus for twenty years (Jud. 4.3) the hapless Israelites found themselves caught

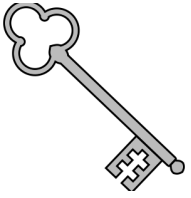
between two fires. This was apparently the worst of all the oppressions; a term is used not employed with any of the others. Jabin “*mightily oppressed the children of Israel*”.

Eventually Israel again “*cried unto the LORD*” and there came to the front a man of Naphtali, who together with Deborah the prophetess who, it is said, occupied the position of Judge, at least of the northern tribes, sallied forth with ten thousand men to engage Jabin’s general Sisera. Chapters 4 & 5 tell the story, how Sisera’s “nine hundred chariots of iron”—typically Hittite; only the Hittites had iron chariots—were utterly routed, all his forces scattered, and Sisera himself ignominiously slain by a woman. The triumphal “taunt song” of Deborah and Barak (Chap. 5) is one of the masterpieces of the Old Testament. What the Egyptians under Rameses II were at the same time failing to achieve. Barak had achieved for them. One is led to wonder if the boastful inscriptions of Rameses II recounting his successes in this campaign do not borrow something from the achievements of Barak, whose defeat of the Canaanite and Hittite forces under Jabin and Sisera must at least have been of considerable help. The fact remains that the treaty of B.C. 1273 which regularised the position left neither Hittite nor Egyptian in a position of dominance and in consequence Israel entered upon a short time of peace—according to Jud. 5.31 a period of forty years,—which probably overlapped to some extent the eighty years “rest” of Ehud’s deliverance from the Moabites in the south. Rameses II married the daughter of the Hittite king Hattusilis II (or III) as sign of eternal friendship and went back to Egypt with his bride, there at once to start plotting against his new father-in-law, and Israel, perhaps for the first time since Othniel, experienced relative peace throughout the land.

So passed the first two centuries of the period of the Judges. The next two, to the end, were to be much more violent. Israel was to be torn by enemy action and inter-tribal strife almost continuously until at last, in desperation, the people beseeched Samuel to find them a king, one who could make them into a nation like the other nations. None of the Judges ever achieved that.

The second and final instalment, in the next issue, gives the rest of the story up to the accession of David the king.

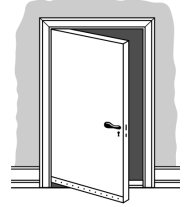
AOH

GOD HOLDS THE KEY OF ALL UNKNOWN—A HYMN

GOD holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad;
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me,
I might be sad.



What if to-morrow's cares were here
Without its rest!
I'd rather He unlocked the day;
And, as the hours swing open, say,
"My will is best."



The very dimness of my sight
Makes me secure;
For, groping in my misty way,
I feel His hand; I hear Him say
"My help is sure."



I cannot read His future plans;
But this I know;
I have the smiling of His face,
And all the refuge of His grace,
While here below.



Enough! this covers all my wants,
And so I rest!
For what I cannot, He can see,
And in His care I safe shall be.
For ever blest.



These words of reassurance were written by Joseph Parker (1830-1902). He was a Congregational Minister in Banbury and Manchester and London. After his death the Parker Memorial Congregational Church was opened in Crowborough in 1907. He wrote many hymns but this seems to be the one that is still heard today and which has brought sustenance to many Christian men and women for decades.

Here are some scriptures which may have inspired the writer;

1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Matthew 16:19 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.

Matthew 6:30-33 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing:...my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1 Samuel 7:12 (RSV) Samuel took a stone and set it up,...and called its name Ebene'zer; for he said, "Hitherto the LORD has helped us."

Psalms 54:4 (RSV) Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

Psalms 121:1-5 (RSV) Whence does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber. The LORD is your keeper; ...on your right hand.

Ephesians 3:11 (Diaglott) According to a Plan of the Ages, which he formed for the Anointed Jesus our Lord.

Psalms 46.1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Heb. 4.9-11 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.

Psalms 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Part 7



The Foundation of the Prayers of Jesus

Jesus emphasised upon his hearers that he was sent into the world to establish among men the words, work, and will, of his Father. He repeatedly declared that he did not speak his own words, nor do his own work, nor impose his own will. To realise this profound truth is to increase our comprehension of what constitutes effective prayer.

Notice these statements of our Lord: “I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). “The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (John 5:36). “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not” (John 10:37). “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” (John 7:16). “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6: 38).

We are impressed with the fact that, while in the days of his flesh, Jesus Christ by implicit obedience in all things enabled God to have his perfect and holy will done on earth, even though it had now become the very stronghold of Satan because of universal sin and darkness. Adam rejected God’s will, and by his disobedience allowed the will of Satan to gain control; but the Man Christ Jesus rejected Satan’s will, and by his obedience opened the way for God’s will to be re-established in the world. Satan’s will brought death. God’s will brought life (John 8:44; 6:40; 10:10; Rom. 5:19).

When Jesus had finished the work his Father had given him to do (John 17:4); when he had spoken all the words he was commanded to speak (John 17:8; 15:15); and when he had accomplished all the revealed will of God (Heb.10:5-9; Psalms 40:6-8), he departed out of the world and ascended to the heavenly Father (John 16:28).

Part of the purpose of God was that Jesus should inform specially selected men of his Father’s great Plan, that they also might know of the various orderly steps toward the salvation of mankind. For they were to continue the work of their Leader, that God’s will might extend through them and

finally be done in the hearts of all men. This important mission Jesus committed to his followers before he departed out of the world: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained (appointed) you...that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:15,16). Just as Jesus was required to ask of the Father in prayer for the things necessary to re-establish His perfect will on earth, so the members of the Church, the body of Christ, must also pray that God's holy will may continue to be accomplished. It is a necessary office, fulfilled by the very elect. Thus our Lord declared: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 15:7; 16:23).

As the Lord Jesus did not act in his own name but in the name of his Father, so neither do we who follow act in our own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ the Victor. This truth is set forth by our Lord himself in these words: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 8-10, 5).

If the words of Jesus are able to abide in us, we must understand the Scriptures which declare them. We must also have faith in the power of God that the words spoken shall be effective. Our Lord had no doubt on this point, for he exclaimed: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). His words were not his own, but the Father's; and he knew that the most High had declared: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). God has the power to carry into effect every detail of his mighty Plan of Salvation. He speaks, and it is done. He is the great Commander. All forces in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, are subject to Him. Therefore his every thought is realised. The Sadducees doubted the resurrection of the dead. Jesus rebuked them and said: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures (the expression of God's will), nor the power of God" to bring his will into realisation (Matt. 22:29).

God's Will may be known.

We cannot suppose that God who *seeks* for such as will worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23, 24), would withhold from us the knowledge of his will; for this would make it impossible for us to pray according to his will. Jehovah does not give his favours with the right hand, and take them away with the left. If we are without definite knowledge of God's will, the fault is not with Him but with ourselves. For Jesus distinctly declared that if any man would do the Father's will, he, would know of the doctrine or teaching (John 7:16,17). He also said: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Obedience is the condition to be observed if we would be filled with the spirit of the Lord, and gain his guidance and counsel in our endeavour to ascertain and do his holy will. The first step of obedience is to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is but our reasonable service (Rom. 12:1, 2). Until we obey in this matter we cannot expect a further revelation of the perfect will, for we would not be in the attitude to rightly use the knowledge.

We have a beautiful illustration of the sure result of obeying the loving invitation of our God, in the account of the construction and erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness. This is given in the last two chapters of Exodus; and the intimation that all parts of the work were completed as the Lord had commanded Moses is there repeated no less than eighteen times, as if to emphasize the importance attached to the implicit obedience of God's servant. Had he failed in any particular (Had he made the branches in the candlestick five, instead of seven; or covered the altar of incense with copper instead of gold, for instance) the presence of the Lord would have been withheld, because every detail had to be made according to the pattern shown in the mount (Heb. 8:5).

We read that when "Moses finished the work. *Then* a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exod. 40:33, 34). Thenceforward the cloud served to guide the nation in their journeys through the wilderness (Num. 9:15-23; 14:14); it continued to give them light during the night (Exod. 40:38); and God spake from it, that Moses might instruct the people unerringly upon every matter. (Exod. 33:7-11; Lev. 1:1; Num. 7:89; 11:16,17,25). These favours were secured, and assured, because of the obedience of Moses at the beginning.

Jesus said: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him....If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:21-23). Also: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments; and I will ask the Father, and he will give you Another Helper, that he (it) may be with you to the Age; the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot receive, because it beholds it not, nor knows it; ...Because it abides with you, and will be in you...the Helper, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my Name, shall teach You all things, and remind you of all things which I said to you” (John 14:15-26, Diaglott—See also John 16:12, 13).

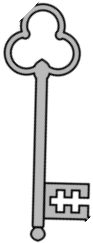
In these words we perceive the antitypical application in the Gospel Age of the wilderness experiences of Fleshly Israel. We Spiritual Israelites show our love for Jesus Christ by obeying his commands, and following in his footsteps of sacrifice even unto death. It is not possible for us to be his co-workers otherwise. In acknowledgment of this we receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit a manifestation of the presence of the Father and His son; and this Holy Spirit, which is said to be the Spirit of Truth, guides and teaches us throughout all our pilgrimage journey to the heavenly home. This applies collectively to the whole Church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven, as well as individually to each child of God. It is not for us to question the means by which God can guide us in our walk of faith, and teach us his perfect will through the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 6:45). We must leave this matter to Him who cannot err. Our part is to take God at his word and make a covenant with him by sacrifice; for if we perform our part, the heavenly Father will certainly perform his (Heb. 6:13-20).

Just as Moses communed with the Lord in the glory-cloud in the tabernacle, so we who are spirit-begotten are filled with the Holy Spirit as we yield ourselves unreservedly to Him (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:18); and by means of prayer we speak to our Father, and ask for that wisdom and guidance which is readily granted in time of need (Heb. 4:15,16; James 1:5-7; 1 John 2:27). The Holy Spirit of love, truth and power, fills us to overflowing and completely transforms us when we take the step of obedience in compliance with the Divine condition (Acts 10:38; 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:7). The one follows the other without fail, for

Jehovah is the God of Truth (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33; Eph. 1:13; Titus 3:4-7). A literal translation of Romans 5:5, reveals much depth of meaning in the Apostle's words: "And this hope is not put to shame, because the love of God has been *flooded* in our hearts by that Holy Spirit which has been given to us." This love, which is "flooded" or "poured" abroad in our heart by the Lord's Spirit sweeps out of it those things of an earthly, selfish, nature and leaves in their stead rich ground for the implanting of the graces of the Christian character (Matt. 13:18-23). By keeping our heart with all diligence, cultivating the fruits and graces of the Spirit and excluding obnoxious growths, we become copies of God's dear Son, and meet for the Master's use (Rom. 8:29; 2 Tim. 2:21). We know that he who possesses this degree of love is a spirit-begotten child of God, because God is love (1 John 4:6-8; 5:3). He it is who has the right to pray, for he can truthfully call the mighty Creator his Father (Rom. 8:14-17).

Next time—The Diversity of God's Will

ME



Jesus has the KEY.

He enables us to gain entrance to the shekinah glory of God's Presence. With Him, we can storm the places where Satan holds people prisoner and open the door of life for them. JESUS says . . . I wait for you to ask so that My will can be done—to preach Good News to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, announce that captives and downtrodden shall be freed, and that the blind shall see. God wants to give His blessings through you . . .

Matthew 16: 19 (RSV) I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven

*At The Name of Jesus
Sarah Hornsby*

A SIGN AND WITNESS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT



A characteristic of the Hebrew prophets is their flair for taking the political events and shortcomings of their own people of their own time as basis for a distant fore-view of the events and failures of the “time of the end”, the era of the close of this Age and the introduction of the Millennium. The prophet commences by denouncing the people of his own generation for their sins and predicts imminent Divine judgment, and then sweeps over the intervening centuries of human history to reveal the same things happening at the end of the Age, presenting the distant picture in terms of the things happening in his own day, and concludes by delineating the intervention of the Lord in his Kingdom taking action to put things right to overthrow the dominion of evil and establish everlasting righteousness.

Such a picture is afforded by the 19th chapter of Isaiah. An exposition of this chapter showed how the political situation existing between Israel and Egypt in his own day was a fore-view in miniature of what is to happen at the end of the Age. The five cities speaking the language of Canaan, the edifice that is to be a sign and a witness, the promised highway connecting Assyria with Egypt, all were spiritualised to afford a picture of the final condition of the world in the day of Christ’s reign over the nations, when the only language will be that of righteousness, the only altar-offerings those made to the Lord, the only witness that to the reconciling power of the Gospel, and the only road open to men that “highway of holiness” which men must tread if they are eventually to “stand before God in Zion”. This is a poetic picture based upon the political events of the time, woven into a vision of the future that shall be when the evil things that darken the beginning of the story are dissipated by the beneficent work of the “Sun of Righteousness.”

But this does not exhaust the purport of Isa. 19. There is a physical reality behind Isaiah’s exalted language: which gave inspiration to his words. “*In that day*” he says “*shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and...witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt*” (vs.19-20). That which gave the prophet inspiration for his twin theme of offering and witness, an altar and a memorial monument, actually existed there in the land as a single edifice, in a quite remarkable

fashion at both the centre and the border. Isaiah must have known of it although he almost certainly never set eyes upon it—the building known today as the Great Pyramid.



In its physical existence that building is a sign and witness to the Divine Plan just so surely as Isaiah's poetic vision looked at Egypt in her then present degradation and her future elevation to the state of the sons of God. Its Descending Passage pictures the descent of mankind into sin, with its inevitable end, death. Its Ascending Passages picture the ascent of man by reason of the Gospel into those aspects of the eternal state which God is providing both for the Church and the world. In the scientific features built into its structure there is revealed the foreknowledge of God, and in its endurance through the ages—for it is the oldest building upon earth, possessing an age of nearly five thousand years—it betokens the preserving power of God. And in that latter vital factor there is enshrined a great truth.

Long ago two great buildings were erected by the sons of men. The erection of the first is described in the 11th chapter of Genesis. Today it is popularly known by the name of Tower of Babel. According to the ancient historians it was—in later years at least—some three hundred feet square at its base and six hundred feet high, the highest building ever erected until the 20th century. Constructed throughout of burnt brick, it was richly ornamented on its outside with carvings and bright colours. Although so huge though, there was a fundamental weakness in its structure, for through almost all the three thousand years that it stood, nearly all the successive monarchs of the land it adorned record labour and money spent on its repair and renovation. Today no vestige of *E-temenanki*, the great Tower of Babylon, “the house of the foundation of heaven and earth”, as they called it, remains, save a few yards of brick wall about four feet high. That tower stood as a concrete symbol of man's defiance of God and rejection of God; today there is nothing of it remaining.

The second, an even greater building erected several centuries later, is the Great Pyramid. The one was in Sumer, the other in Egypt, the two great civilisations of the ancient world. Of this second building the ancient Egyptians declared that its plans were revealed from heaven. Arabic writers of the Middle Ages said that it enshrines data on arithmetic,

geometry, and astronomical facts, as well as a chronicle of time past and future. So far as facts regarding the three sciences are concerned modern scientific research has established beyond doubt the accuracy of the Arabs' observation. Whoever designed the physical features of the Pyramid was cognisant of, and embodied in it, the precise values of many geophysical and astronomical quantities some of which were not discovered by or known to man until the last two centuries. The very unit of measurement used in its construction has been shown to equal the one ten-millionth part of the earth's radius, a more scientific unit than even the metre of the metric system. A notable body of men, scientists, astronomers and archaeologists of the 19th and 20th centuries, have certified the verity of this position without being able to suggest how early man could have had either the knowledge or ability to express such matters in stone. Some of these facts, such as the distance of the earth from the sun, were certainly known to the Sumerians of early times, but others, such as the true size of the earth, could not possibly have been known by them unless, as asserted by the ancients, the design came from heaven.

Such an idea is usually scoffed at in our modern sophisticated times but it is not so incredible as some think. It is significant that at just about the time of the Pyramid's erection, in a different part of the world, the kingships of the first political realms were, according to Sumerian tradition, "*let down from heaven*". There is increasing ground nowadays for concluding that in the early days just after the Flood and for several centuries thereafter there was a state of devotion to God with no competing pagan gods in human society which could well indicate a condition of communion between God and man which has no parallel today.

It would appear that Robert Menzies of Edinburgh in 1865 was the first to attach a Christian Messianic significance to the passages and chambers of the Great Pyramid and from his and other subsequent students' work a comprehensive system of symbolism has been developed which has the merit of corresponding in close detail with the Plan of salvation presented in the Scriptures. From this there has developed endeavours to foretell the precise dates of future prophesied events such as that of the Second Advent. The fact that some of these expectations have failed of fulfilment no more denies the authenticity of the Pyramid than have the failures of many similar attempts in the realm of Bible chronology in times past discredited the Bible. In both cases it only demonstrates that some of the

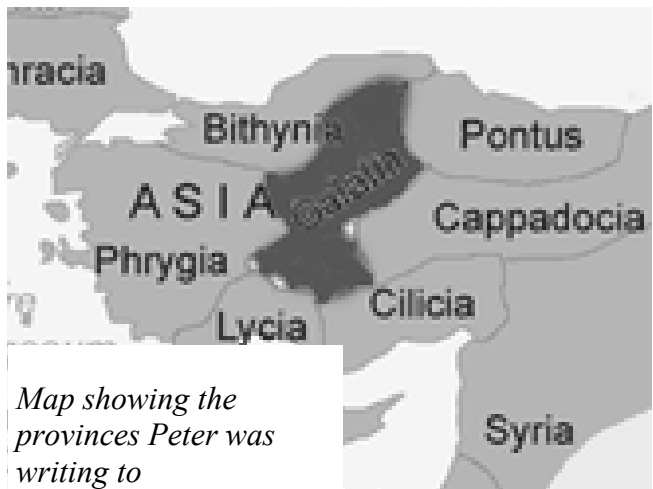
conclusions drawn from available data were incorrectly applied.

So the “Bible in stone” remains, a concrete reality which cannot be explained away. The fitness of the spiritual symbolism cannot be denied; the accuracy of the embodied scientific data cannot be and is not disputed; no rational ground exists for deciding that men of that time had acquired such knowledge by their own efforts. The only logical conclusion is that the same All-High One who gave Noah the instructions for building the Ark, and Moses the detailed plans for building the Tabernacle in the wilderness, did in between these two revelations give some person or persons unknown the intricate design for building this structure which has aptly been called “a miracle in stone”.

The Apostle Peter tells us, referring to the truths of the Christian faith, which we have not been following “*cleverly devised myths*”. (2 Pet. 1.16 RSV) Here is the confirmation; those same truths, built into imperishable stone so long ago, remain to our day, in very fact a visible representation of the “Word of God, which lived and abideth for ever”. (1 Pet. 1.23)

AOH

For further enquiries on the subject of the Great Pyramid please contact Mr. F. Binns, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, U.K. (Phone: (01494) 771774)



THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Extracts from the Bible Study Monthly on a New Testament book

With the close of the Jerusalem conference of AD 50, recorded in Acts 15, Peter drops out of New Testament history. A few brief allusions in one or two of the Epistles afford some slight clues to his later movements but that is all.

With the aid of this admittedly slender store of data it is possible to frame a very tentative outline of Peter's probable activities during the last twenty years of his life. Nothing definite can be claimed, but the outline is at least consistent with what is known and with what could be expected of a man of Peter's character and calibre.

From the Day of Pentecost to the conference at Jerusalem, Acts 2 to Acts 15, was a period of seventeen years. During the whole of that time Peter had laboured tirelessly and zealously to build up the church in Judea, Samaria and Galilee. He had worked virtually entirely inside the Jewish community whilst Paul had been travelling the wider world taking the Gospel to the Jews of the Dispersion and the Gentiles. Now the Jewish-Christian churches in Jewry were well-organized and ably led. James the Just was leader of the central church at Jerusalem and had many efficient helpers.

The first move appears to have been to Antioch. Paul's reference in Gal. 2.11-14 to an altercation he had with Peter at Antioch concerning the latter's alleged 'separation' or 'dissembling' could only have taken place in AD 54, four years after the Jerusalem conference. Paul was with his home church at Antioch for about six months in that year, between his second and third missionary journeys, and after that he never returned to Antioch. It could be inferred therefore that Peter spent the next few years as leader of the Antioch church. There might have been a real need for his service. Not only Paul, but Barnabas, Silas, Lucius and possibly others of the church presbyters had all gone off on extended missionary tours.

The next clue to the Apostle's movements is afforded by his First Epistle, written from Rome a decade later and addressed to "*the strangers*" (a term for Jews living in Gentile lands) "*scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia*" (1 Pet. 1.1). These provinces

were adjacent one to another in what is now modern Turkey, and some of them were areas into which the Apostle Paul never penetrated. The inference is obvious that Peter wrote to these particular brethren because he himself had been the means of their conversion, and that he had undertaken an extensive missionary journey in these lands similar to those conducted by Paul farther west. This would account for Peter writing to them later on in life when he realised that his own end was approaching and he could not expect to see them again in the flesh. It is certainly a fact that Christianity was very strong in these provinces at a very early date, especially in Bithynia where Luke is reputed to have ended his days twenty years after Paul's death. It is difficult to account for this fact except on the supposition that they were evangelised by Peter. Antioch was the great missionary church of the times. Antioch had sent Paul and others on many such journeys. It is quite in keeping to think that after Peter had spent say three or four years at Antioch he too, with the blessing of that church, should set out on this enterprise, the result of which was the establishment of so many Christian communities in these five provinces. On the basis of the time taken by Paul's similar journeys, this tour by Peter would have occupied at least three years. It would in such case have extended over the years round about 58 to 60, so that Peter could have returned to Antioch at about the same time that Paul, as a prisoner, was being sent by Porcius Festus to Rome to stand trial before Caesar the first time.

The native Christians of Rome, who had so recently endured the horrors of Nero's persecution in AD 64 following the Great Fire of Rome, might perhaps be excused for not wishing to be involved in the trial of Paul, but not so one of Peter's calibre. Moreover, on the authority of Peter's First Epistle, both Mark (1 Pet 5.12-13) and Silas were with Peter in Rome.

The logical inference is that Peter arrived in Rome after Paul left the city in AD 63 and was martyred before Paul was brought back in AD 67/68 for his own trial and death. Silas had already gone, bearing Peter's First Epistle to the churches in Asia, and Mark would obviously go immediately after Peter's death, so that when Paul arrived there were none of his old friends in the city. That is what all relevant Scripture allusions seem to indicate.

On this basis events begin to fall into place. If, after his return from his

missionary journey into the Asiatic provinces, Peter spent a few more years as the leading presbyter at Antioch, which is what the traditions insist, one comes to AD 64, when Nero instigated the first and most terrible of all persecutions. The Church at Rome was decimated and most of its leaders martyred. What more natural than that Peter, fired by his ever-present burning zeal, upon receiving the news should decide to proceed to Rome himself to help his suffering brethren? He would probably arrive as the persecution was ending. Although terrible, it lasted less than six months and was virtually over by the end of AD 64. Peter would find much to do in re-organising and encouraging the scattered remnants of the Church and he took Silas with him. Silas was an old stalwart of Antioch who had originally come from Jerusalem so that Peter had known him from the beginning. It is quite likely that Silas, who had accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey, had also shared Peter's missionary tour to the five provinces. He is described in Acts 15. 26 as one who had "*hazarded (his) life for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*"; just the kind of man Peter needed by his side. The couple were accompanied by Mark, and this is where certain scraps of history fit the picture. Mark is known to have founded the church at Alexandria in Egypt, at a much earlier time. He was at Rome for a short time during Paul's first imprisonment in AD 60/62 according to Col. 4.10 and Philemon 24. This coincides with the statement of Eusebius, the learned 4th Century church historian, who says that Annianus succeeded Mark in AD 62 as the bishop of Alexandria. After Paul's acquittal and departure from Rome with Luke and Aristarchus, Mark, as the only one left, would not be likely to stay. Moreover, Paul would want his home church at Antioch to be apprised of the turn of events; most likely, therefore, Mark was sent there for that purpose, and so was available two or three years later when Peter was ready to set out.

For the present this was hidden from their sight. The sun shone warmly and the wind filled the great sail as the ship made its way steadily towards Rome. And Peter talked vigorously and enthusiastically of the work they must do in rallying the remaining brethren, binding up the wounds they had suffered, and encouraging them to hold fast to their faith. The prospect of persecution he probably dismissed as unimportant; he had already had many conflicts with the authorities and miraculous deliverance several times. He was now quite persuaded that he was immortal until his work was finished. It was almost certainly with intense interest

and eager expectation that the Galilean fisherman set eyes upon the great city which was the capital of the world, impatient to begin his labours under the shadow of its walls. Perhaps he dreamed of a repetition of Jerusalem at Pentecost here in Rome: perhaps of another missionary Church like Antioch...

It was not so to be. About three years at the most seems to have been the limit of his service for the scattered brethren in Rome. Assuming that he commenced his work there in AD 65, he must have written his First Epistle a year or so later and dispatched it by Silas to the Asiatic brethren to whom it was addressed. That left only Mark with him (1 Pet. 5.13). That the shadow of persecution was over the church is evident from his use of the symbolic term “Babylon” for Rome when he said in the same verse “*the church that is at Babylon salutes you*”. If the letter fell into the authorities’ hands before Silas got clear away from Rome there would be nothing to incriminate the writer or his brethren. (*Simon Peter—Fisher of Men P.11*)

1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

And while his (Peter’s) immediate readers were already of an elect nation—inasmuch as Israel had been separated out of the nations to be God’s people—yet he speaks of these followers of Jesus as participating in a further and more exclusive ‘election’—“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.” *Aug 41*

It was the heavenly Father’s foreordained intention to select the “Bride” for his Son from the fallen human race; and in so doing he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence (**1 Pet. 1. 2**; Eph. 1. 4-12). *ME*

“For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren, and whom He...called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom. 8. 29-30 ASV). Thus writes the Apostle Paul in words of great force and insight. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the elect...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

Such are the words from Peter's pen. These are the most direct and specific phrases in the New Testament setting forth the stages in the process of selection, and of the experiences involved in the equipment of the elect for the work to which they have been called. It may be to some advantage to strip the language used in our Versions of some of its Calvinistic austerity by substituting other words for those around which Calvinistic and Arminian advocates fought so fiercely in other days. Foreordination and pre-determination sound much harsher and forbidding than the word "pre-arranged", but in essence they mean the same. "Select" or "choose" have a milder sound than their equivalent "elect", but their meaning is the same.

Carrying the New Testament phrasing back to the institution of the Aaronic service, it may be said, first, that this priestly service was instituted exactly as it was pre-arranged by God. It was all foreknown by God, and predetermined by him before the pattern of the Tabernacle was shown to Moses. It was arranged before the foundation of that "*kosmos*" were laid. Thus Aaron and his house were foreknown of God in connection with that service from before the foundation of that World. *July/Aug. '85*

It needs a strong faith to believe that faulty, tainted men can be of use to God, and that men with ingrained sin can be counted holy men—yet, so it is! Aaron was but an ordinary man till God chose him and clothed him in white robes and chrismed him with oil. It was not for what he had already done that God's choice fell on him, but for what God could cause Him to do. No more is it for what we have done that God's Spirit comes upon us, but for what God will fit us to do. Consequently, as in Israel the priests were not made holy *by* service, but *for* service, so the priestly members of the Royal Priesthood are not accounted holy by what they have done, but by the blood of sprinkling and by their reception of the Holy Spirit (**1 Pet.1.2**). *The Beauty of Holiness*

GOD FIRST

Our love for God
To love with all our mind
And heart and soul
We hold supreme.

May no attachment here betray
Our consecration vows.
But God thru Christ
Us did God commend
Our love for one another.

Poems of The Way

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

I. The Prophet and the Book

A strange and thrilling time was the Era of the Restoration, when fifty thousand eager pioneers left Babylon and set out across the desert for the ruined country of Judea, there to build a Temple and a homeland. Few of them had seen Judea before; seventy years had elapsed since their fathers had been taken captive to Babylon, fifty-one since the Temple and city of Jerusalem had been destroyed, and most of the returning pilgrims had been born and brought up in Babylon and knew of their ancestors' homeland only by repute and description. But now Babylon was fallen, given into the power of Cyrus the Persian conqueror, and Cyrus had granted leave to all of the Jewish community in his new conquest to go back to the land of their fathers and there restore their Temple, their national worship, and some semblance of their old-time communal life, requiring only that they continue loyal to the suzerainty (authority) of Persia. So they came, bearing with them the sacred vessels of the Temple so ruthlessly despoiled by the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar half a century ago, exhibited as trophies of conquest in the Babylonian Temple of Marduk, and now destined to stand in their rightful place and serve their rightful role in the ritual of the worship of the God of Heaven. No wonder they sang, as the Psalmist says they did sing, on that arduous journey *"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."* (Psa. 126. 1-2). No wonder they came into the desolated land camped among the ruined buildings of what had once been Jerusalem, seeing around them, by the eye of faith, the glorious land that was soon to be, and they themselves, the people of the Lord, exalting Israel once again to a place among the nations, mighty in the strength of the God of Israel.

It was not long before the golden vision faded and the old enemies of greed, indifference and moral laxity asserted themselves. Commercialism replaced sacrifice; the acquisition of property and the building of houses attracted more attention than the erection of the Temple of God. The community suffered accordingly. *"Is it time for you, O ye"* thundered Haggai the prophet *"to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house (Temple) lie waste?...Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled...; ye clothe you, but there is none warm;...Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine*

house (my Temple) that is waste, and ye run (attend) every man unto his own house!" (Hag. 1. 4-9). Sixteen years it was since the pioneers came to Jerusalem with such high hopes, and this was all there was to show for it! No wonder Zerubbabel, the governor of the colony, and Joshua the High Priest, were ashamed as they led the people in a great outburst of enthusiasm which sought to rectify the wrongs which had been allowed to develop.

It is at this point that Zechariah comes into the picture. A much younger man than his fellow-prophet Haggai, he had nevertheless shared in the journey from Babylon and from the nature of his prophetic visions shows that he must have known much about life in that notorious city. Like Haggai, he was possessed of a burning zeal for the establishment in Judea of a true theocratic State, and a certainty that all the Divine promises relating to the coming glory of Israel must most certainly come to pass. In this the two prophets were markedly different from the Governor and the High Priest, both of whom seem to have failed to display those qualities of leadership and foresight necessary for so great a purpose.

Zerubbabel had been appointed Governor of the colony by Cyrus, responsible to him for maintaining its loyalty to Persia. The appointment was obviously a diplomatic move. Zerubbabel was the legal heir and successor to Jehoiachin the deposed King of Judah. He was probably in his early thirties and does not seem to have been particularly distinguished. Joshua the High Priest was a grandson of Seraiah, High Priest at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, who was executed by Nebuchadnezzar; he was most likely a much older man. These two figure largely in Zechariah's prophecy. Zechariah himself was of the priestly tribe. He says of himself that he was the son of Berachiah and grandson of Iddo. (Zech. 1. 1) From Nehemiah 12. 16 it is evident that Zechariah was still alive in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah some seventy years after the Return, by which time he must have been of a considerable age. Tradition has it that—unusually for a Hebrew prophet—he survived and died peacefully in extreme old age and was buried beside his old friend and colleague Haggai. His prophetic ministry must therefore have spanned at least fifty years.

The Book of Zechariah consists of three main divisions, and the style and subject matter of the third is of a vastly different nature from that of the

other two. The first division, occupying chapters 1 to 6, dated in the second year of Darius (520 B.C.) the year in which the building of the Temple was resumed, comprises a series of visions the subject of which is the restoration of Jerusalem and of Judah as a nation, leading onward in time to the consummation of Israel's history in the Millennial Kingdom and accepted Divine rule over all the earth. These visions are highly symbolic and the imagery is taken from the writings of the prophets who preceded Zechariah; to understand their meaning to any extent even today requires a reasonably detailed knowledge of the Old Testament. Thus in the first vision the prophet sees Israel in captivity to the great nations of then current history—Assyria, Babylon, Persia—and the time come for God to redeem his promise of deliverance for Jerusalem. From that the scene changes to the preparation of the Promised Land for the returning multitudes and a hint that the complete fulfilment of this must extend into a then far future day. Next comes the preparation of the royal Priest-King who is to rule “in that day” accompanied by the Divine instrument of salvation forged from amongst men—the “servant” of Isaiah, to be a light to the nations to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Following that comes the promulgation of Divine Law which will root out all evil and establish everlasting righteousness, and finally the regathering of all from the many dispersions which have afflicted God's people during the course of history, and the full establishment of the Millennial order of things. In these visions Zechariah takes his stand in the land of Judah of his own day and looks forward to the end of time, describing what he realises are the principles of the Divine purpose yet to be worked out. In all of this he gives evidence of a clear-sighted understanding of the basic laws of God and the road which, not only Israel, but all men, must traverse to reach the objective God has set.

The second division, given two years later, whilst the rebuilding of the Temple was actively proceeding, covers chapters 7 and 8 and consists of two “oracles”, or messages from Heaven to be declared to those of the people in Zechariah's day directly concerned. Although at first sight these chapters appear to be of purely local application to events in the time of Zechariah, closer examination reveals that here is enshrined a statement of the essential principles upon which God ultimately bases his acceptance of Israel at the end of the Age and the manner in which He will use Israel in the work of his Kingdom. The entire picture is presented in the form of what, in mediaeval England, was called a masquerade, a kind of play in

which the actors take their places, asking and answering questions in which the message to be given is contained. In this instance representatives from the religious fraternity of Israel come to Zechariah to enquire as to the propriety of certain ceremonial observances; the prophet tells them, in effect, that since their past observances have been characterized by ritualism rather than sincerity, God is not interested in their offerings anyway. This gives opportunity for a stirring exhortation to sincere repentance and reformation of life that they might be truly fitted for the Divine purpose; that purpose is then revealed to be nothing less than the exaltation of Israel and the land of Israel as the centre of Divine administration on earth when the due time should come, but all this is dependent upon faith and sincerity. So the terminal point of the oracles is the same as that of the visions of chapters 1-6, the glory and blessing of the Millennial Kingdom. In the visions the necessity as well as the certainty of Divine power and action to establish the "new heavens and earth" is shown; in the two oracles the necessity of repentance and willing subservience to the Divine will on the part of Israel before the new heavens and earth can become a reality is pictured. With both these factors established the groundwork is laid for the final division of the Book. This tells of events more closely associated with the actual passing of the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God. This third division, chapters 9 to 14, is of a fundamentally different style and nature from the earlier parts. Where chapters 1 to 6 comprise a succession of symbolic pictures based on past Old Testament literature, and 7 to 8 are hortatory, enshrining principles of Divine Law applicable to any Age and generation, these last chapters 9 to 14 are frankly prophetic, foreseeing the shape of things to come in the logical outworking of events determined on a basis of cause and effect. It is easy, and it is true, to say that the revelation of happenings yet in the future is possible by the power of the Holy Spirit, but it has also to be remembered that the Spirit-filled mind of a man like Zechariah, attuned in a very real sense to the mind of God, was of itself empowered to foresee the outcome, in future history, of events and forces belonging to his own time. The prophet clearly comprehended the ultimate purpose of God; he understood the manner in which, and the extent to which, the unbelief and the belief, the opposition and the concurrence, of men in his own day and in future times would influence and modify the road by which that goal would eventually be reached, and by that means the Spirit was able to guide him to an appreciation of "things which shall be hereafter" in so definite a fashion that he was able to set down in these chapters so

detailed a description of things which had not yet—and in great degree have not yet—transpired.

The striking difference between the two earlier divisions of the Book and this one has led a number of scholars of the “Critical” school to claim that chapters 9 to 14 are not by the Zechariah of the Restoration era but by an unknown writer of much later times. In point of fact, this difference in style is logically to be expected. The first two divisions, written in the second and fourth years of King Darius, are the product of Zechariah’s youthful years; he was a man of round about thirty. Chapters 9 to 14 are not dated, but the general background and a certain amount of internal evidence would point to a time nearly half a century later, at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It may reasonably be taken that the prophet had reached the maturity and insight of old age after a lifetime spent “in tune” with God and this in itself amply accounts for the difference in style and the rich colouring of his prophetic vision.

This section commences with an outline sketch of the forces that were to affect Israel after the then present Persian domination had passed away. A new ruling power was to come upon the stage, one that we now know to have been the Greek power, which overthrew Persia. In this crisis Jerusalem was to be preserved, for the good work of the Restoration was still bearing some fruit. Hope of the climax to Israel’s expectation would come to the front; the promised King would be manifested and offer himself to the people. But despite Divine assurance that He would indeed ultimately reign, a darker hue is drawn over the scene. Israel apostasizes and rejects the King who is also their Shepherd, and for an Age that rejection endures whilst God as it were turns his back upon the unrepentant people. But He has not done so for ever nor even in reality; in the fulness of time and when some through the generations have shown themselves ready to serve him, God arouses to action. There is a regathering of his ancient people to their ancient land, a time of opening of eyes and of repentance, and a great cleansing, preparatory to the coming of Messiah and the Millennial Kingdom. Simultaneously there is a moving of powers of evil in the world in opposition, seeking to destroy what seems to be the incipient establishment of the new and righteous world order. The consequence is a further test of faith, a second apostasy and a second rejection of the Shepherd; but a remnant preserves faith and to this remnant the Lord comes in complete and permanent deliverance.

NOTICES

BIBLE STUDENTS SEMINAR DAY

SATURDAY 13 JANUARY 2018

CRICK VILLAGE HALL

Bucknills Lane, Crick, Near Rugby, NN6 7SX

11 a.m.—5 p.m.

All Welcome

For a programme, please email nick.charcharos@btinternet.com

Or by post 12 Stanley Gardens, Tring, HP23 4BS

BIBLE STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

Afternoon Tea Wednesday 15 August –Afternoon Tea Sunday 19 August 2018

High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire

Theme; Revelation 2 & 3

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Beryl Charcharos (Leicester)

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So transpires the great event to which all human history has been tending, the revelation of the Lord from Heaven to all mankind, the overthrow of all evil dominating power and the establishment of Divine sovereignty on earth. The glorious vision closes in the spectacle of, not only Israel, but the whole of humankind, delivered from the darkness of sin and death, fully entered at last into the eternal light and life of the illimitable future.

The Book of Zechariah is a remarkable book; remarkable because of its unshakeable confidence in the ultimate execution of the Divine purpose despite the shortcomings and frailty of man. The prophet lived his life in an age that of itself provided a picture in miniature of the glories he

foresaw in prophetic vision, but it was an age that, after Zechariah's death, belied its early promise and the light faded into darkness again. He himself in full confidence of faith looked toward a day when the darkness would not return, and in so doing coined, at the close of his book, a phrase which has become immortal; "*At evening time it shall be light*".

To be continued

AOH



THE GIFT OF THE KEYS

It must be carefully noted that our Lord used the same words which He addressed to Peter also to individual believers in Matt. 18. 18, and again to His assembled Apostles and others who were gathered with them in the Upper Room on the evening of the Resurrection Day. See Luke 24. 33, and John 20. 22 and 23.

In the light afforded by these references we may extend the significance of this gift of the keys to include all who live and act in the power of the Holy Spirit. If we have received that blessed gift of the Comforter, as they did on whom the Master breathed that Easter evening, we also may wield the power of the keys. Not ours the prerogative of the Apostles, but only the humble distinction of having, walked to Emmaus, first with broken and then with burning hearts; yet even such may, in the power of the Spirit, be entrusted with keys that shall open closed doors, and emancipate prisoners from their cells.

Here, for instance, is a broken-hearted penitent who thinks that her sin is too great to be forgiven, and some Christian sister takes as her key our Lord's words to such in Luke 7, or John 8, and instantly a door is opened by which she passes into the Peace of God.

The Knights of Arthur's Table rode forth into the wild wastes of the Kingdom of the Beast, intent on righting wrong, and succouring the oppressed. Never a day without its gallant deed. We, too, are dedicated to similar enterprise. Let us not hold back lest we miss the vision of the Holy Grail! We, too, possess the Sword of the Spirit and the Keys of the Kingdom! We, too, may catch a glimpse of the holy cup of sacrifice!

F.B. Meyer

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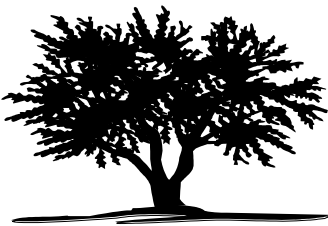
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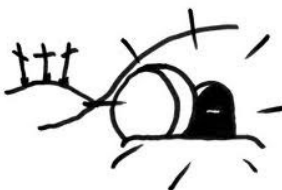
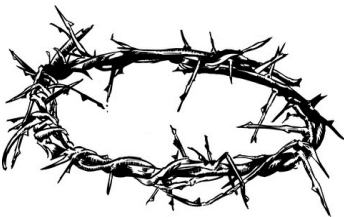
BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Volume 95 Issue 2

March / April 2018



All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death, if only I may finally arrive at the resurrection from the dead. Phil. 3. 10 (NEB)



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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV).

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.
Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

At this season of the year our minds are on the Last Supper, Jesus' death and his resurrection on the third day. Are these just technical details and how does this affect our daily lives?

Paul used the example of not muzzling an ox while they work in the farm environment to prevent them eating what they had been set to work at to the way he lived his life as an apostle especially to the Gentiles in 1 Cor. 9. 9-10 thus also showing the Pentateuch had lessons for those in this Christian era.

Job when he said "I know that my redeemer lives" gave hope of the resurrection and reassures us that a better day is coming. In addition it leads the Christian to think there is someone there for us.

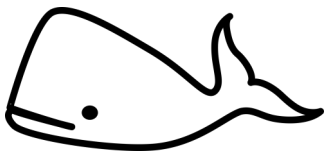
The daily or hourly privilege of prayer allows us to share our life knowing that our prayers are listened to and that answers will be given to direct our paths especially when new experiences come our way.

Passages of scripture like the sermon on the mount help us to aspire to the highest ideals in our dealings with other people by not just looking at what we say and do but the heart condition that brings about such words and deeds. This is because the Christian is "risen with Christ".

Therefore we rejoice in the word of God every day and in our Christian walk as we get to the time when we consider our Lord Jesus' death and resurrection and look forward.

THE MISSION OF JONAH—A BOOKLET

Why consider such a booklet at this time of the year one may ask? Well because it has been suggested that Jonah the prophet was a type of Christ, in that sacrifice, death, resurrection and conversion are key features of his dramatic life..



It goes into many areas of the book of Jonah considering among other things how he survived three days in the belly of a great fish.

Its also a timely reminder that God cares about all nations at a time when his prime concern was the children of Israel. This comes at a period when Mosul in Iraq has been in the news for most of this century and the ancient city of Nineveh is on the eastern side of that city which has seen much conflict, close to the Kurdish population that has suffered so much.

Luke 11. 29-30 (NEB) *“The only sign that will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.”*

This booklet is available free on request. Please write to 12 Stanley Gardens, Tring, HP23 4BS, U.K. or email—editor@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk

Rembrandt—The Prophet
Jonah before the Walls of
Nineveh



“RISEN WITH CHRIST”

The third chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Colossians opens by referring in three ways to the believer’s union with Christ, who is the highest of all aspirations to holiness of conduct:-

In the past: “If then you have been raised with Christ” (RSV);

In the present: “Your life is hid with Christ in God”;

In the future: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”. (Col. 3:1,3,4)

Accompanying these wonderful words are two admonitions, and many others follow in the course of the chapter. Those closely associated are: “Seek (for) those things which are above” and “Set your affection (mind) on things above, (see John 8: 23) not on things on the earth”. Consequently, our desire should be that increasingly we may become heavenly-minded, not in any dreamy or mystical sense, but in the sense of prayerful, practical Christ-like godliness. It was our dear Lord Himself who said: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”.

In verse 3 there is depicted the standpoint we should have of ourselves, that we have died to sin and earthly things, and that our new life in Christ is hid with Him in God, as treasure in a secure place. It is safely deposited with our Redeemer in God’s presence.

Verse 5 brings us “down to earth” in the sense that although the Apostle has outlined our resurrection position in Christ, we are nevertheless still in the flesh, in a body of sin and humiliation, and are called upon to subdue every carnal and evil propensity of our lower nature. Actually we are told to “mortify” them, that is to say, put them to death. Five are detailed, and here, as in other places, Paul ranks covetousness as being as base and detestable as the other passions. Covetousness is low and debasing, because it secures the affections which properly belong to God, and is therefore idolatry. This is the passion that dethrones God from the life. The apostle sees no difference between a covetous person and one of impure life, because covetousness is more difficult to discern than is impurity of life. To covet is as much opposed to the spirit of the gospel as any of the vices here named. The word in the Greek rendered “covetousness” here means “a desire to have more”, and is used always in a bad sense. It is not alone concerned with earthly goods but also in other

ways. It may enter into opportunities of service for the Lord, when others enjoy privileges that oneself does not. It can apply to those in poor health, when they compare themselves with others who are stronger. It can apply as between Christians who are blessed in different degrees with earthly possessions.

Jesus said, when telling us that He was the true vine and we the branches, that His Father is glorified if we bear much fruit. Today we hear regarding industry the call for “more productivity”. Our heavenly Father looks for this in our Christian life. This is not that we might justify ourselves in His sight by our “works”, but rather in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, depending always on Him who works within us to will and to do His good pleasure. Fruit production, as every grower knows, is dependent upon certain definite measures being taken to prevent disease and the ravages of pests. These have to be “mortified” by various means, or the trees will be barren or the fruit seriously impaired; so in the Christian life. Pests such as Paul enumerates must be put to death, and healthy Christian lives restored and maintained.

Paul urges our putting off certain other, shall we say, finer evil manifestations that are inconsistent with the Christian calling, among which is blasphemy. This means “injurious speaking” whether against God or man, in which evil many Christians indulge in respect of their brethren and others.

“Lie not to one another” (v. 9) might appear an unnecessary injunction to one called of God, but nevertheless the Apostle regarded it as being necessary at that time. The almost parallel passage in Eph.4: 25 gives the reason for “putting away lying” because “we are members one of another”—brethren in Christ. This vice is a universal fruit of sin and there is no single form of sin that reigns so markedly in the heathen world into which former members of the church at Colosse were born, but more enlightened peoples even in these days are not guiltless of the vice.

In accepting the gospel of Christ, the Colossians had “put on the new man” (v.10) and God’s law had been re-written in their hearts, so that they were being “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”—that is to say, becoming like Adam in his original state of human perfection. They are now related by faith to the “last Adam”, being

distinguished from all the rest of mankind, as Paul says here, “Christ is all, and in all” (v.11). The fact that believers belong to the one body; redeemed by the same blood; chosen by the same grace and are all brethren in the Lord, should lead them also to “put on” the wonderful qualities enumerated in verse 12 to 14—mercifulness, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness (“even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye”) and love, which is here called “the bond of perfectness”—that which unites all other graces together and makes them complete.

“And let the peace of Christ (not God, as in A.V.) rule in your hearts, to the which (peace) also ye are called in one body”. (v.15) The peace which our Saviour gives—His own peace—is to “preside” in our hearts; to govern and control us; to save us from disorder and irregularity during our Christian walk. We are all liable to the agitation of passion, like an assembled mass of people. “The peace of Christ” will calm down every agitated element in a Christian’s life—just as a gifted leader might sway and control the passions of an assembly. (Such is the significance of the Greek word translated “rule”). “To the which (peace) also ye are called in one body”—to be united as one under the “presidency” of Christ’s peace.

“And be ye thankful”. A thankful spirit tends to promote harmony. An ungrateful people is generally a restless, dissatisfied and unholy community. Gratitude to God for His mercy literally promotes peace.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”. Here the reference is to the teaching that abundantly produces the spirit of true wisdom. We are to meditate upon the doctrines and teachings of the gospel; and allow them to be our guides. Even psalms and hymns and spiritual songs can and should have a powerful effect on Christian lives mutually, if sung with “grace” in our hearts to the Lord. (v. 16)

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”. (v. 17) Comprehensively, the words cover all that we say or do, inclusive also of our temporal affairs— all the common tasks that occupy those who work to earn their living, and the wives or others who are at home doing and preparing the things needful. Everything should be undertaken in the name of the Lord Jesus, and again thanksgiving is to be our constant

attitude while we do all in the name of the Lord. Thankfulness for strength and reason; for the privilege of serving Him. He who is likely to perform his duties most cheerfully is he who has the deepest sense of indebtedness and of gratitude to God for His mercies through the Saviour He provided.

The Forest Gate Bible Monthly



RAISED TRIUMPHANT

*Out of the shadows, and of the night,
Out of the bane, and of the blight,
Out of the place of the briar and thorn,
A nation appears, a nation is born—for God.*

*Out of the turbulent tide of time,
Out of an age of fear and crime,
Out of the world's insolvency,
A nation is born for eternity—with God.*

*Splendoured all with the eastern glow,
Clothed in a cloud, with a moon below,
Wearing robe that his love hath given,
Shining out with the light of heaven—and God.*

*Noonlight, sunlight and peace without,
Ever ready at love's sweet call,
A nation, the greatest the world has known,
A nation to sit on the glory throne—of God.*

Poems of the Way

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

2. The Rider in the Myrtle Trees

The series of visions comprising the first six chapters of Zechariah are very similar in style to those of the Book of Revelation, the outstanding difference being that whereas Revelation deals with the Church's conflict with evil during this present Age, Zechariah's visions include Israel and her conflict with evil during the times before Christ. Both reach to the same period—that of the Messianic Kingdom upon earth. The style of symbolism, based on Old Testament history and prophecy, is common to both and it is likely that Zechariah, like John on Patmos, saw these strange and picturesque tableaux in waking moments, closely attuned to the influence of the Holy Spirit and completely unconscious of the everyday world around him. Whether they appeared as optical views before his physical sight or were directly impressed upon his brain is of no consequence; in either case the understanding was conveyed to his mind so that to Zechariah it was as if he indeed stood and observed in a world where these things were real.

The first vision (chapters 1. 8 to 2. 13) showed him a man, riding a red horse, standing motionless in a grove of myrtle trees at the bottom of a deep valley. Behind the rider appeared others, also mounted on horses, denoted red, speckled and white. Zechariah enquires as to the identity of these riders, and an angel—the “revealing angel” who remains with the prophet throughout the visions—tells him that they are those whom the Lord has destined to wander through the earth. At this point the riders address a cry to their leader on the red horse complaining that in their wanderings they find that all other peoples in the earth are at ease and rest; they alone apparently are compelled to wander eternally. At this the leader on the red horse, who is now called “the Angel of Jehovah”, raises his voice to God, desiring him that He will show mercy to Jerusalem and Judah, who have been under his displeasure for seventy years. The Lord replies with an assurance that the time has come for his displeasure to be lifted, for Jerusalem to be rebuilt, and prosperity come to Israel. At this point a pair of horned bulls appear on the scene and the prophet becomes aware of the menace of their four powerful horns. To his further enquiry the angel declares that these horns are the powers which have scattered Israel and Judah over the earth but their power is about to be broken. Behind the bulls come four craftsmen bearing the tools of their trade;

these, said the angel, come to restrain and break the power of the horns and make possible fulfilment of the Divine promise.

The key to this rather strange imagery is contained in verse 12, where the Angel of Jehovah cries "*O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?*" This is obviously in reference to the Babylonian captivity recently ended, which was always described in terms of a punishment of seventy years. On this basis the subject of the vision is Israel at the time of the Restoration and this is the starting point of Zechariah's prophecies.

The mounted riders, sent by the Lord to "*walk to and fro through the earth*" (Zech. 1.10) are symbols of the people of Israel, condemned to banishment, to be wanderers and exiles among all nations. The other nations of mankind, by contrast, "*sitteth still, and is at rest*" (1.11) in their homes, but Israel has no home. Because of past apostasies the Lord has dispersed Israel thus. Now the time has come for her to be regathered to her own land, symbolised by the myrtle trees in the deep valley. The myrtle, indigenous to Canaan, is used as a symbol of the Holy Land; in Zechariah's day Judah was not, as at other times, exalted to the tops of the mountains, but occupied a very subordinate position as a province of Persia, hence "*in the valley*" (A.V. "*bottom*" (1.8)). There were three groups of horses, distinguished by three colours. The Israelite riders are carried by the horses "*to and fro through the earth*"; evidently in the horses we are expected to see the hostile nations which conquered Israel and took the people into captivity. There were three such up to Zechariah's day, Assyria, Babylon and Persia. One group of horses was red, one "speckled", and one white. The rendering of "speckled" is open to question; the word only occurs once elsewhere, in Isa. 16. 8 where it is translated "principal plants". Ellicott suggests that "*seruqqim*" here is a corruption of "*shechorim*" which means black, and this supposition if accepted creates a harmony between these horses and those of the later vision in chapter 6, which lends support. On the assumption that this conclusion is justified there is a certain fitness in the colours. The red horses picture the Assyrian power, the first to exile Israel from the land and carry them away "*through the earth*"; red is the colour of blood and hence a symbol of war, and Assyria more than the others waged frightful and unrelenting war in the pursuit of its ends. The black horses picture

Babylon, the next nation to enslave Israel. The Babylonians were not so outrageously cruel as the Assyrians; they waged war only for the attainment of their object and Israel's bondage to them was characterised more by the hopelessness of captivity in a strange land without hope of release. The blackness of death was a fitting symbol of Babylonian bondage. "*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion*" (Psa. 137. 1 RSV). In contrast to that, the Persian rule which succeeded Babylon was one of tolerance and favour, opportunity for the exiles to return and rebuild their homeland. Hence the white horses fitly indicate Persia.

Now the wanderers have returned to the homeland. They stand among the myrtle trees, and with them is their princely champion, the Angel of Jehovah, himself riding a red horse. He also has come forth for war, but in his case it is war for the deliverance of the oppressed people. They have someone to plead their cause before God and to lead them unto victory. This is not the first time that the Old Testament hints at an other-worldly power pledged to the defence and triumph of Israel. Joshua, contemplating his plans for the conquest of the Promised Land, was met by a celestial visitant, a soldier with drawn sword, who told him "*as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come*" (Josh. 5. 13-14). In the days of Hezekiah the Angel of Jehovah appeared in the night and decimated the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19. 35). In the last great conflict, said the revealing angel to Daniel, Michael the great prince will stand up to deliver Israel and bring the evil powers to an end (Dan. 12. 1) and Michael here is but a cover name for the Angel of Jehovah. His true identity is made known in the Book of Revelation, where in chapter 19 the Heavenly Rider appears to make short work of the armies of evil, and reveals his name; the Word of God! Here in Zechariah, then, the Angel of Jehovah is the Divine *Logos*, later to be personified on earth as Jesus Christ the Son of God, here pictured as superintending the regathering of Israel and the overthrow of Israel's enemies. In all of this there is a vivid fore-view of a greater regathering and a greater overthrow when this same Divine Word, "*this same Jesus*", is revealed in the power of his Second Advent for the world's deliverance.

The Angel of Jehovah cried to the Lord for an end to Israel's exile and suffering; the answer came, not to him but to the revealing angel with a message for the prophet. "*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am zealous for*

Jerusalem and for Zion with a great zeal” (“jealousy” in the O.T. has the meaning for which we now use the word “zeal”) “...*I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: ...my cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem*” (ch. 1. 13-17).

Here is the basic promise. The people shall be restored and Israel shall rise again. The national enthusiasm aroused by this message did indeed have the effect of creating a revived Jewish State, even though subject to Gentile rule, for a few centuries, but eventually the heavy hand of the oppressor came down upon them again. The promise had only a limited fulfilment, for the people were not yet ready for their high destiny.

“Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns” (ch. 1. 18). These were most likely representations of the horns of bulls, used so often in the Scriptures as metaphors for the idea of power or brute force, and by extension of ideas to denote, prophetically, earthly powers or kingdoms. Thus *“the horn of Moab is cut off”* (Jer. 48. 25) denoting the end of Moab as a nation; there are many similar instances. The angel explained the horns as symbolising the powers *“which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem”* (ch. 1. 19). Immediately behind the horns came four *“carpenters”* (ch. 1. 20 A.V.). The Hebrew word means any craftsman or worker whether in wood, metal or stone; perhaps “craftsmen” is the happiest rendering since nothing is said as to whether they were carpenters, blacksmiths or stonemasons. Whereas the horns pictured the earthly powers which had desolated Israel, the craftsmen, said the angel, represented a further power which was to destroy the horns. *“These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these”* (the craftsmen) *“are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles”* (ch. 1. 21). This word “fray” is rendered by most modern translators to terrify or frighten; “fray” in modern English means to rub or file down or to wear away, but in medieval English and therefore in the A.V. it meant to terrify or affright, and is the root of our modern words “afraid” and “affray”. It is tempting to think of the four horns finding reality in the four empires which held Israel in thrall, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, but in such case there would need to be found four individual powers to act as their conquerors. It might well be that since the number four is associated with the idea of universality as respects things on the earth—four winds of the earth, four corners, and so on—the

idea here conveyed is that of the entire assembly of hostile nations at enmity with Israel helpless in the face of a new development, the appearance of a corps of craftsmen, of builders, who not only cannot be resisted but eventually strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. From this point of view the vision may well picture the commencement of a great development in the outworking purpose of God. Up to this time, the people of God have been helpless in the grip of their enemies. That grip has been loosened and there now appears a company of builders, of craftsmen, who are going to build the Temple of God and make it an architectural and artistic creation to the glory of God, and there is nothing the nations can do to stop it. And when that Temple is complete its builders will become a means in the Lord's hand to annihilate all evil. No wonder the enemies are terrified. The horns of evil are to be broken and scattered; the craftsmen, rejoicing in the edifice they have erected, will emerge triumphant.

To a degree this vision had an application in the building of the Second Temple and the restoration of the Jewish State in the days of Zechariah, but only to a degree. Other horns were afterwards to appear with their threats of oppression; other builders come upon the scene to build an even greater and spiritual Temple. The symbols must surely find their full scope in the work of all God's servants, whether Old Testament Jew or New Testament Christian, labouring to build that edifice which will become the meeting place between God and man in the coming Age of blessing. The builders of times gone by, the builders of today, all will find that their combined life's labours have resulted in the weakening and final downfall of the horns of the nations. Had Israel in the days of the Restoration been all that was indicated, one solitary craftsman could have filled the picture; the fact that four craftsmen, as four horns, are seen, denotes that in them is included the entire, the universal, company of labourers for God in all ages, united together in one great work, the builders of the symbolic Temple of God and the elimination of all evil from among the nations.

All this was still in prospect. Jerusalem as yet was still in ruins and the prophet was painfully conscious that his people needed positive assurance of the future. That assurance was now given. Chapter 2 opens with a new character in the drama, a man carrying a "*measuring line*", more properly a surveyor's cord, for this man is a surveyor, come to measure out the

ground and plan the new Jerusalem. This was the answer he gave to the prophet's enquiry. "*To measure Jerusalem*" he said "*to see what is (to be) the breadth thereof, and...the length thereof*" (ch. 2. 2). This is the first result of the promise given in chapter 1. 16 "*I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies:...saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem*". The city destroyed seventy years before by Nebuchadnezzar was to rise again.

But there is a new aspect to this restoration of the ancient city. Whilst the surveyor was getting on with his task, the revealing angel left Zechariah's side and "*went forth*" to meet "*another angel*" who was advancing towards him. It seems very likely that this "*other angel*" was in fact the Angel of Jehovah of chapter 1, for the words he speaks in the following verses and the position of authority he seems to occupy are hardly appropriate to anyone of lesser rank. He gives the revealing angel an instruction. "*Run, speak to this young man*" he says, referring to Zechariah, who was a silent observer "*saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein*" (ch. 2. 3-4). These few words expand the scope of the prophecy at one step to include the glory of Israel at the end of this present Age. The expression "*towns without walls*" is exactly the same as the "*unwalled villages*" of Ezek. 38. 11. "*Perazoth*" denotes unfortified country villages, incapable of defence against an enemy. At only one time in history can Jerusalem be described by the epithet "*perazoth*" and that is when the inhabitants thereof have put their entire trust in God for deliverance from their foes. "*For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her*" (ch. 2. 5). This is an expression definitely associated with Israel's final triumph. "*The LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory*" (Isa. 60. 19). "*In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks*" (Isa. 26. 1). Verses 4 and 5 are clearly intended to extend the scope of the vision from the Restoration of Zechariah's own day to the greater and final restoration at the time that God comes in power for the salvation of men. To express the same thing in New Testament language, it is the time of our Lord's Second Advent and the establishment of his Millennial Kingdom.

On the basis of this promise God now calls his people back from captivity. Here there is an extension of prophetic view into future times,

for at this moment the nation had already returned from Babylon and were engaged in the rebuilding of their national polity. But not all. There were more Jews remaining in Babylon than returned with Zerubbabel and Joshua. In the days of the Book of Esther, only thirty years later, they were to be found in every province of the Persian Empire, from Egypt in the west to India in the east. The vast majority of the Ten Tribes had not come back; they were still in the mountains of Assyria and Media, and most of them never did come back. Here in the prophecy the Lord is looking to a greater and still future Return and a correspondingly greater Restoration.

“Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven...Escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon” (ch. 2. 6 A.V., 7 R.S.V.). There is a two-fold Return envisaged here. Those who still dwell with Babylon are bidden to escape to the homeland whilst yet there is time; those who have been scattered to the four winds of heaven, an expression indicating the widespread lands of all the earth, are called to take their flight homeward. As respects this latter injunction, at the time of the vision Israel had not yet been scattered, in that sense, to the four winds of heaven, so that here again we have a word which carries us forward in time to the day, to use the words of Jeremiah, when God will send for fishers and hunters to seek out his people from every part of the world and send them home (Jer. 16. 16). And the next two verses clinch the argument, for the Lord goes on to declare that He will shake his hand over the enslaving nations and they will become a spoil to Israel (ch. 2. 8-9). That cannot be until the close of this world order. In no sense of the word did Persia in Zechariah’s day become “a spoil” to Israel, nor have the powers of this world at any time since. Upon the contrary, before many centuries had passed Jerusalem entered that phase foretold by our Lord when He said that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled.

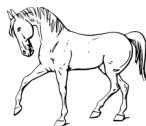
The rest of the vision almost explains itself. *“I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD”* (ch. 2. 10). Words of tremendous import mirrored in John’s visions of Revelation *“the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God...shall...be their God”* (Rev. 21. 3), and if the Revelator’s words in fact take in their scope, not Israel alone but all

mankind, that does not destroy the analogy for both are true in point of time. The next verse in Zechariah demonstrates that. *“And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee (you)”* (ch. 2. 11). Words such as these can only be true at the end of this Age when Heaven comes down to earth for the salvation of mankind. This entire vision, which begins its story with the return of a band of Jewish exiles to their ruined land in about the year 536 B.C. as riders upon red, black, white horses led by the Divine Lord on his red horse, closes with the greater return from all countries of the earth and at the end of this world-Age, led still by that same Divine Lord. His name now, in this greater and more momentous context, is called the Word of God. He appears from the heavens, still mounted upon a steed for war, and of him it is said *“in righteousness he doth judge and make war”* (Rev. 19. 11). What wonder that this first of Zechariah’s visions closes with the commanding words *“Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation”*. (ch. 2. 13)

AOH

To be continued

Horses come in various colours. The modern thoroughbred horse is a mix between British mares and Arabian stallions. The Arabian horse comes from the region where Zechariah was writing from, Israel. The most common colours are:-



Bay—the coats are tan-coloured with black manes and tails

Chestnut—the coats are from red-yellow to golden-yellow with a mane and tail of a similar colour. If a horse is named say ‘Red Fanfare’ it is often a chestnut because of the reddish hue.

Brown—with a dark or brown coat with a brown mane and tail.

Grey—with a mix of black and white hairs in the coat and a black or grey mane and tail. Such horses often go white when they are old.

Roan—with a mix of red and white coat hairs, the mane and tail can be black or chestnut.

Black—entirely black.

Palomino—golden yellow coat with a flaxen, straw-coloured mane and tail.

All these colours can be with patches of white part from the white horse which is entirely white.

PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Part 8



The Diversity of God's Will

God's will concerns many things, and his power is exerted in numberless ways. It may be miracles, casting out demons, stilling the storms, or delivering the persecuted—as Daniel from the lions, the three Hebrews from the fire, Peter from prison. These are physical demonstrations of power. The spiritual and unseen operations of the Divine might are more wonderful, but little known. For instance: the will of God concerning us is our sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). We express this will in prayer, in secret, and the resulting power of the Holy Spirit comes upon us and accomplishes a sanctifying influence. We read that our heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him for it, than an earthly father is to give his son earthly gifts (Luke 11:13).

We know that the only work of any avail is God's work of salvation, and that prayer to be effective must be in line with this great design. How does this apply to each individual child of God? Does it not mean that many of our personal requests will not be granted? Regarding this phase of our spiritual life, the Scriptures hold out the assurance that the effectiveness of our petitions depends on the motive which inspires them, and the purpose to be served. All things are permissible if the motive is right, and if the favours we ask for are in line either directly or indirectly with our Father's gracious plan. For our Lord's invitation and promise: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive", need not be limited (Matt. 21:22).

As it is God's will that a Bride for His Son shall be selected from this sinful world, it is in order for us to pray to this end. That is, it is correct for us to pray for everything that will complete the sanctification of God's selected people. Is any sick (sin-sick) among you? Well, remember that the prayer of faith will heal the sick. Is any in overwhelming difficulties, so that the spiritual life is endangered? Pray that God may remove these difficulties, and he will do it. How do we know? Because it is his will, as the Scriptures say: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation (trial) also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Jesus said: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones

should perish” (Matt. 18:14). Claim every promise of God in Christ’s name, nothing wavering, and God will honour our faith and answer our prayers (Rom. 4:20,21).

The realisation that the heavenly Father is ready to honour our prayers gives us a peaceful mind and heart which nothing can disturb. “In every thing by prayer and supplication..., let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6,7). The child of God who has at heart His Father’s grand work, who desires above all else to see His will done on earth everywhere, would not think of requesting by prayer anything for selfish interests. “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired (desire) of him” (1 John 5:14,15).

ME

Next time—The Sacrificial Life is Misunderstood

NOT I, BUT CHRIST

NOT I, but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted;
 Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard;
 Not I, but Christ, in every look and action,
 Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word.

Not I, but Christ, to gently soothe in sorrow;
 Not I, but Christ, to wipe the falling tear;
 Not I, but Christ, to lift the weary burden;
 Not I, but Christ, to hush away all fear.

Not I, but Christ, in lowly, silent labour;
 Not I, but Christ, in humble, earnest toil:
 Christ, only Christ! no show, no ostentation;
 Christ, none but Christ, the gatherer of the spoil.

Christ, only Christ, e’er long will fill my vision;
 Glory excelling, soon, full soon, I’ll see—
 Christ, only Christ, mine every wish fulfilling—
 Christ, only Christ, mine All in All to be.

Poems of Dawn

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES—A HYMN

I KNOW that my Redeemer lives;
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting Head!

He lives, to bless me with His love;
He lives, who bought me with His blood;
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;
He lives, my help in time of need.

He lives, and grants me daily strength;
Through Him I soon shall conquer death;
Then all His glories I'll declare,
That all the world His life may share.

Alternative 3rd verse

He lives, and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives, my mansion to prepare;
He lives, to bring me safely there.

Samuel Medley (1738-1799) wrote those words over 200 years ago. Yet this hymn is still well-known and well-loved. Medley was born in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire and after two brief spells as an apprentice and in the Royal Navy, he became a minister. He was first a minister in Watford, Hertfordshire and later in Liverpool. He wrote several hymns which were printed from 1782 onwards.

A common tune for these words is 'Fulda' set by William Gardiner with claims to have come from Beethoven.

Here are some scriptures which may have inspired the writer;
Job 19:25-27 (RSV) For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold.

John 20:20 (RSV) When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Luke 24:6-7 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

Luke 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Philippians 4:19 My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

2 Cor. 13:4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

Hebrews 7:24-26 (RSV) He holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Col. 1:18-22 He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence...And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him,...whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies,... yet now hath he reconciled. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.

1 Cor. 15:51-57 We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment,...at the last trump:...and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For...this mortal must put on immortality. So when...this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. .

THIS THING IS FROM ME

When the ten tribes broke away from the house of David, king Rehoboam assembled an army in Judah with the object of fighting the rebel tribes and bringing them once again into subjection. God, however, sent Shemaiah the man of God to the king to prohibit this war-like attempt, commanded him to disband his forces, and added these illuminating words, “this thing is from me” (1 Kings 12:24). While this revolt was obviously the outcome of Rehoboam’s obstinacy and folly, yet the disruption of the kingdom had already been pronounced by God to his father Solomon on account of his idolatry (1 Kings 11:11-13), and also it had been confirmed to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:31).

As in the case of so many events related in Scripture, there were personal, social and political causes for this great revolution in the kingdom of Israel. The rashness of Rehoboam, the bold astuteness of Jeroboam, the despotism of a wealthy cultured civilisation, each gave occasion to rebellion now that Solomon was removed. Yet behind all these stood the great moral and spiritual cause—this thing was from the Lord. It was His righteous judgment on the idolatry, the pride, the despotic self-indulgence of the court of Solomon.

How difficult it often seems to trace the true cause of the calamities that come into our own lives. We may blame this or that, but at the back of everything else there stands One who says “this thing is from me”. If we are a precious people to God, and the eye of the Lord is over us, then all things are working together for our good, however much it may seem otherwise. The difficult and trying circumstances with which we are surrounded are not there by chance; these things are from God. There is a purpose in them that we may be quite unable to fathom, but that the purpose is for our highest welfare we should have not the slightest doubt at any time.

When the dark shadow falls across our life; when the road becomes rough and long; when the night is dark and sorrowful; when the struggle seems beyond our strength; to believe that “this thing is from me” will take the sting from our anguish, and bring light, comfort and rest to our weary souls. Besides this we find that the sorrows of life cause us to look upwards towards God, to exercise and develop our faith in Him, to value

our hope for the eternal future, and to know and reciprocate the love that is watching over us with such jealous care.

Let us seek then to accept God's will, for this is the highest form of faith, the greatest and most lofty achievement of the Christian. It is when we believe God and his Word in spite of the fact that appearances, circumstances and human reason all argue to the contrary, that our faith is truly triumphant. When the ship was in imminent danger of being wrecked, "when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days," and all hope of being saved from the tempest had gone, then it was that Paul said "Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Acts 27:25). May we have the faith, whatever comes into our life, to trust our God and Father who says "this thing is from me."

The Forest Gate Bible Monthly



Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things.


God's children are like tea bags: they have to go through hot water before the aroma becomes more pleasant.

If you want a rainbow, you must put up with the rain.

A storm-weathered tree is stronger and deeper-rooted than a sheltered one.

It takes darkness to see the twinkling stars, and it is in the darkest hours when we appreciate God's bright promises most.

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook



The following article was first printed in the February 1944 issue of the Bible Study Monthly when the U.K. was still experiencing frequent bombing and the rest of the world were at war. Yet the writer of this article and his colleagues were looking forward to their future work in Christ's kingdom.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18)

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Notes on the Christian's mission February 1944

(Please see note at the bottom of page 61)

There is grave danger that we Christians shall be shamed by the kingdoms of this world. At this present time both Britain and America are methodically selecting suitable men to be administrators and officials in the occupied and subjugated territories at the end of the war. This, of course, is in the expectation that the war will result in military victory for the Allied nations. Likely men are called before selection panels and closely questioned as to their technical qualifications for the work in view. But this is not sufficient; they must also satisfy their examiners as to their general education and knowledge, the breadth of their mental outlook, their qualities of character. They are requested to describe their hobbies and leisure interests, the games and sports in which they excel, the public or social service to which they may have given time and energy in the past. In short, every care is being taken to secure men who will be fitted by training and character to supervise the work of reconstruction and education which is to be undertaken in Central Europe when the conflict is over.

Now, we in our fellowship know that these plans are doomed to disappointment. Excellent though the intention may be, it remains that the new edifice is intended to be built upon the old foundation of man's self-sufficiency; and man is not self-sufficient. "Except the Lord build the house; they labour in vain that build it." If these men, all of them, could add to their otherwise doubtless excellent qualifications a whole-hearted consecration to the service of Jesus Christ and an intelligent knowledge of His teaching, there might be some hope; but the candidates are not questioned to any extent upon their religious convictions and activities; these are not regarded as of first-class importance.

We believe—or profess to believe that civilisation is heading for disaster, and that after that disaster comes the Kingdom of God upon earth under the spiritual rulership of Jesus Christ the King. We generally accept the view that the establishment of this Kingdom—an event within measurable distance, to be reckoned perhaps in decades—is to witness the instalment into office of a body of trained and prepared spiritual administrators for the purpose of world conversion. That is the truth underlying Scripture references to the reign of Christ and His Church over the world. We say

we are members of His Church. The question inevitably arises: “Shall we be fit for the work when the time comes? Are we so ordering our lives **now** that we are receiving the necessary experience to qualify us for the high duties of the future?”

Technical knowledge is not sufficient. We are, most of us, keenly alive to the necessity of faith in the Scriptures and a thorough knowledge of the principles therein outlined. But if the net result of our studies is to produce a company of amateur theologians who can agree neither with outsiders nor even between themselves, our time has been wasted. We shall require, not only a sound grounding in the principles of God’s plan of salvation and the laws of the incoming Kingdom, but also that depth of vision and breadth of experience which comes only from a lifetime spent in the profession and practice of the Sermon on the Mount. We need to know and sympathise with the sufferings, the temptations, the failings, as well as the well-nigh inarticulate aspirations, of sin-sick humanity, and we can gain that knowledge only in the way that Jesus did—by living amongst them and ministering to them. We have no need to join in the world’s schemes of reform—they are doomed to failure anyway—but we have great need to go out and preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and comfort all that mourn. Only thus shall we be ever fitted for the infinitely greater work of the future, when God calls all the nations before Him.

One wonders how we would fare if a Divine selection panel was set up here and now, and we were called in one by one for questioning. The technical examination we in our circle might pass with flying colours—we can most of us expound the philosophy of the Atonement to our own entire satisfaction, and describe in well-turned language the precise meaning of the visions of Revelation. But suppose the Examiner turned to deeper questions of the heart, and probed into the manner we have manifested Him to our brethren and to others, how we have maintained the unity which is the hallmark of discipleship, how we have made known His teaching to those around us, preached to the castaways, comforted the suffering, preserved the sheep of His pasture, one wonders just how we would fare. One might come out from that Gracious Presence feeling far less smug and self-satisfied than when he went in.

And that might not altogether be a bad thing!

THE 12 APPEARANCES OF JESUS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

Jesus died in public and his body was released by the Roman authorities to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who placed him in a sepulchre (tomb) which was also observed by the women from Galilee. Matthew records that a “great stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre”. Matt. 27. 60. The chief priests remembering that Jesus had prophesied that he would rise again after 3 days went to Pilate who commanded in Matt 27. 64 that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day lest his disciples come by night and steal his body saying ‘he is risen from the dead’. To the ever-cautious Pilate this would have given him some security and an action to keep the appearance of control. So they also sealed the stone and set a watch. The seal meant that if the stone were moved it could be shown that the grave had been tampered with. The guard meant no one could come in or out without being seen and noted by the guard.

So everything was secure by Friday evening according to our manner of describing days. The Sabbath day rest ended at 6 p.m. on the Saturday and by then it would be too dark to work and so no one, like Mary Magdalene, would come to the tomb until the first day of the Jewish week. That would be Sunday for us. (I presume she came early once it was light even though the day time temperatures are not too extreme being about 65F in the middle of the day which would be about 17 or 18 degrees centigrade.)

The 12 appearances of Jesus after his resurrection from Easter Sunday onwards are:

1. **Sunday morning to Mary Magdalene.** John 20. 11-18 Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, presumably soon after the dawn of the day, one would imagine, the sun weakly putting its rays across the tops of the trees and rocky outcrops. One would not think that she was looking forward to attending to the body, but it would have been important to do this service to her Lord. But she finds the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. She runs to get Peter and John and they find the linen that Jesus’ body had been wrapped in and the head cloth also folded up. Mary stands there crying and moving towards the entrance to the tomb sees two angels sitting inside. They ask her why she is crying and she says they have taken her Lord away and don’t know where they have put him. Then turning around she sees Jesus, although she does not recognise him thinking him to be the gardener. Why she did not realise? It may be incorrectly

assumed that Jesus in his resurrected form was not wholly human and therefore did not always chose to be like his former self and he may not be wearing his usual clothing. He says her name and she says “*Rabboni*”. Then she knew and embraced him the resurrected Jesus who then sends her to spread the news by telling the disciples.

2. **The women returning from the sepulchre.** Matt 28. 9-10 says ‘they’ but who are ‘they’? Matthew in verse 1 has Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. Mary Magdalene it seems had already left the scene but the other Mary was there and whoever came to help them, maybe Salome as recorded by Mark. Jesus speaking to them clearly marks that they knew him and this time, the scripture says, they fall towards his feet. This time the message was to tell his brethren. To whom is Jesus speaking? The Greek word is *athelphous* as in brothers literal or figurative. It may simply mean the 11, or his relatives or the brethren in general.

3. **Appearance to Peter.** This is recorded in Luke 24. 34 as well as in 1 Cor. 15. 5. It does not say where or when. It has been suggested that Simon Peter alone was on the road to Emmaus or alone in Jerusalem. But it clearly happened and after Peter denied him three times and cut off the ear of the soldier that Jesus had to heal, it must have been of special comfort to him.

4. **On the road to Emmaus** Luke 24. 13-31. There were two walking to the village of Emmaus, which is 7 or 8 miles from Jerusalem. Cleopas is the one named. It is thought he may be Alphaeus the father of James who was one of the twelve, but not James the son of Zebedee. The other could be Peter again, but it seems it was not one of the other twelve. One commentator has suggested that it could be Luke himself. But the two record a stranger joining them on the road, not an unusual event to see someone from out of town as it was the feast of Passover. Again they did not recognise him in his new form and his old clothes had been divided among the soldiers. They pour out their hearts all the things that they had seen and known about in Jerusalem from his death on the cross a few days ago to the empty tomb and the message from the angels that Jesus was alive. The apparent stranger, that being Jesus, expounded on the scriptures that the Messiah should die before being glorified (given honour). The two asked him to remain with them, clearly keen to have passages being opened to them and he stayed to have a meal and he took the bread, blessed it and broke it and they then knew who he was before disappearing from in front of them or vanished as the scripture states. In these days of science fiction it would be said he dematerialised.

5. **Sunday evening without Thomas.** John 20. 19-25 The disciples, minus Thomas, were gathered in a (locked) room with the doors shut, when Jesus came in the middle of them without coming through the door saying, 'Peace be with you'. Having done so he showed them his hands and his side. In the Luke account (Luke 24. 36-49) he shows them his feet and then eats with them. He appears as a human with skin and bone. It does not categorically say the scars were there but there was no doubt in the mind of the disciples that it was Jesus. Proof would have been needed and that is why he did not ascend to his Father for 40 days.

6. **One week later.** John 20. 26-29 This time Thomas is present. It has been suggested by some commentators that Thomas was a pessimist and perhaps a person who felt his 'glass was half-empty' rather than 'half-full'. This characteristic appears to be used to put this record down. Thomas says unless I see his hands and the print of the nails, put my finger into the print of the nails and put my hand in to his side, I will not believe. Thomas had his hands put in the nail print and the gash in the side and says, "My Lord and my God". Clearly Jesus here has the precise signs that Thomas was wishing to see that of a person who has died by crucifixion with a gashed side as recorded in John 19. 34 that proved he was dead before they took him off the cross as the blood and the water were separate.

7. **Three weeks later to the disciples on the shores of Galilee** John 21.1-14. John records it "at the Sea of Tiberias" and states this is the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples. Seven of the disciples had gone fishing. These included Simon Peter, James and John, Thomas and Nathaniel (otherwise known as Bartholomew) as well as two others that are not recorded but could be Andrew and Philip. They went night fishing but caught nothing. Jesus was standing on the sea shore although they did not recognise him. He tells them to cast their nets on the other side and they catch so many fish that they were not able to draw the net in. At that point John realises that it is the Lord Jesus and tells Simon Peter who realises the truth of John's statement and rushes out towards the shore. Jesus prepares breakfast and gives it to them and afterwards has a long conversation with Peter.

8. **To the eleven on a mountain in Galilee** as Jesus had appointed. Matthew 28. 16-20. We do not know what mountain as it is not recorded and when they, which would include Matthew himself, saw him and they worshipped him. Although it says some doubted, it does not say whom or what those doubts entailed.

9. **To more than 500 brethren** (*athelphous*) in Galilee 1 Cor.15. 6. The significance of this is the large number; for us a moment to imagine as if we were of that 500.

10. **James** at close of 40 days. 1 Cor. 15. 7 No other details are added. It is thought that this is more likely James, the writer of the epistle, rather than James, the son of Zebedee (Acts 12. 1-2) who would have been dead by the time that the first epistle to the Corinthians was written by Paul in approximately A.D. 55.

11. **His Ascension** Luke 24. 50-51. Jesus led them to Bethany presumably from Jerusalem. He lifted up his hands and blessed them and then it appears that he was carried or lifted up. The Greek word for carried up is *anefereto* which means to take up literally or figuratively—bear, bring, offer up, carry, lead up. Acts 1. 9 records Jesus being “taken up”. In this case it is the Greek word ‘*epirthy*’ which means to raise up literally or figuratively, exalt self, poise, lift, take up. He was carried up into heaven. The Greek word for heaven is *ouranon* which gives the idea of elevation, the sky, heaven as the abode of God, by implication happiness, power, and eternity. Ouranon is also used in Rev. 21. 1. Acts 1. 9 (Diaglott) says “a cloud carried him away from their sight” while they were looking towards the heavens (*ouranon*). This is a spectacular event that they were watching. One can imagine them gazing for any last sight in case he should come into view for one more glimpse. However they were distracted by the sight of two angels which the record states as “two men standing by them in white raiment” with a message of encouragement.

12. **Paul on the road to Damascus.** Acts 9. 3-6 The account says as Paul neared Damascus a light came suddenly from heaven and a voice said, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord? Asks Paul. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting’. Paul’s life was transformed from that moment when he heard the Lord Jesus.

Maybe this final one should not be included as there was no visible sight, just a light and sound as Jesus had already ascended to the Father. Jesus’ voice and words are prominent proof of his resurrection in several of these sightings.

How does this prove the resurrection

It proves that the resurrected Jesus was seen of MANY PEOPLE much more than 500 hundred, women and men. He was seen or heard many times—to be exact eleven or twelve times of those recorded in the New

Testament and for a period of 40 days. Even those inclined to doubt received proof. The many details given in the accounts also attest to its authenticity. All the records agree he could speak audibly, could eat and appear as flesh and bone and reason and instruct with intelligence. It shows the form of such a resurrected being and would backup what they already knew that Jesus was the Son of God. It also shows the surprise, elation and other emotions being evoked and that these accounts were real and not contrived in advance.

So surely one can say '*I know my redeemer lives*'.

RESURRECTION

*May the joy of his resurrection
Fill your heart as you journey along.*

*May the peace he bequeathed be your
portion,*

May his love in your heart be a song.

*May the hope thus begun become
brighter,*

*May your faith in him firmer be,
Until soon in that first resurrection*

His glorious face you shall see.

Songs of the Nightingale

CHRIST WITHIN

A LIVING Christ, of wondrous birth,
Who trod the dreary paths of earth,
Shedding abroad His holy light
Through the deep gloom of sin's dark
night.

A living Christ our spirits need,
A loving Christ our souls to feed;
A dying Christ, our ransom He,
A risen Christ to set us free.

A dying Christ, whose precious blood
Seals the poor sinner's peace with God;
And fills the soul with fullest love,
Like to the joy prepared above.

This, too, our need—a *Christ within*,
A life with God, afar from sin,
A Christ whose love our hearts shall
fill,
And quite subdue our wayward will.

A Christ ascended—all is done,
A world redeemed, a victory won.
With angel hosts, a glorious throng,
We'll sing with joy salvation's song.

Poems of Dawn

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Extracts from the Bible Study Monthly on a New Testament book—Part 2

Our final inheritance is in Heaven. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1. 3-4)*

The idea behind this use of the word “immortal” or “incorruptible” is that of continuance into all perpetuity without cessation or decay. The symbolic “crown” which is the promised reward of the Christian is said in 1 Cor. 9. 25 to be of this nature. “They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (Greek *aphthartos*). So also is the promised inheritance of 1 Pet. 1. 4 “An inheritance incorruptible” (*aphthartos*). (Nov/ Dec 1991)

In this Christian dispensation there have been many professing Christians, but few have entered the “strait gate” and walked the “narrow way” (Matt. 7. 13,14). Those who do so have a “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (RSV). Theirs is “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven”. (1 Pet. 1. 3-4) This “*treasure*” will be completed in the First Resurrection when they will “be like him” and “see him as he is”. (1 John 3. 2) They speak often to each other—they “forsake not the assembling together”. They are looking for the day when they will be together for “ever with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4. 17) as his own treasure, to possess the inheritance reserved in heaven. (May June 90)

Belief in the Messiah-ship of Jesus of Nazareth is the beginning and end of our Christian faith. It lies in the centre of all that Christianity means to us and it enshrouds and embraces every phase and aspect of the Christian life. In 1 John 5 verse 1 this belief is an indication that we are “born of (the Spirit and) God”; that points to the beginning of our walk along the Narrow Way. In 1 John 5 verse 5 the same belief is an assurance that we shall overcome the world; that points to the end of our walk. It is true that in an accommodated sense we can say that we are overcoming, or have overcome the world, here and now, but in the strict and truest sense of the word we cannot say we have overcome until the earthly life has ended

and we have passed the final test. It may well be that here in this passage John is thinking more of present experience than final achievement, nevertheless the idea of the last judgment can never be far from his thoughts, and when in 1 John 5 verse 4 he tells us that the victory which overcomes the world is our faith he must surely be thinking of the same thing that inspired Peter to write *“that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* **(1 Pet.1.7)** *The Epistles of John*

When the patriarch Job saw the meaning of his terrible experiences, he gave an exclamation of triumph, “He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23. 10). Likewise the apostle Peter reminds the suffering Christian, that the trial of his faith is much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire (1 Peter 1. 7). *FL*

“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls”. **1Pet.19**

It is only when the end has come that we can expect to see the fruition of our work, and only by patient continuance in well-doing that we shall receive the prize of immortality (Rom. 2. 7). It is noteworthy how often the Scriptures stress this fact. The “Gospel...shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matt. 24. 14). “Go thou thy way till the end be” (Dan. 12. 13). “Receiving the end of your faith” (1 Pet. 1. 9) “At the end it shall speak, and not lie” (Hab. 2. 3). “Then cometh the end, when He...shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor. 15. 24). It is at the *end* that we shall realise the fruitage of our sowing and reaping. *(Nov/ Dec 1989)*

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. **(1Pet1:10-12)**

How God Communicated His Will. During the course of the centuries

God declared the numerous details of his purpose or idea; for we read that “Holy men of God (of old) spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”; and “God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (2 Pet. 1. 21; Acts 3. 21). Not only did he express himself by human mouthpieces under inspirations, but also by means of types and shadows; or, as the Scriptures put it: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past” (Heb. 1. 1).

How God’s Will is Realised. But most of these expressions were sealed (1 Pet. 1. 10-12; Matt. 13. 16-17; Dan. 12. 9). Nearly all were dark sayings and parables and therefore unintelligible, and by men much misunderstood and misapplied. None but the “wise” or spiritually-minded can understand the “deep things” of God, and then only when these are due to be revealed.
(ME)

The fact that such beings must be always actively participating in the affairs of, and contributing something to the progress of Divine creation follows from the very fact of their existence, for this is the whole purpose of God in creating living intelligences. An eloquent word in Psa. 103. 20-21 confirms this. “Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his...will” (RSV). Here is a picture of a community engaged in the discharge of duties laid upon them by God. There is nothing illogical or even improbable in expecting that some of those duties may have connection with the affairs of men upon earth. There is certainly definite assurance of the live interest in the affairs of earth displayed by the celestials. From the days of the formation of this planet, in which, as recorded in Job 38. 7 “*all the sons of God*” (i.e., the angels) “*shouted for joy*”, to the time of the First Advent when, according to St. Peter, the angels desired to understand more of the things being preached by the Apostles (1 Pet. 1. 12), there is this interest. Sympathy with the distresses of humanity is revealed by our Lord’s assurance that “*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*” (Luke 15. 10). (July/ Aug 1988)

The Kingdom and all matters pertaining to it must be prayed for; and if men did not pray angels would. We read that angels desired to look into these things; but God has not committed the future Kingdom into the hands of the angelic hosts, but to specially chosen men, the Son of Man himself being chief. The prophets of old foretold of the sufferings of this chosen class, and the glory of the Kingdom to follow (1 Pet. 1. 12; Heb. 2. 5).
(ME)

With that in mind it may appear that the words of the heading “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15. 4) is far too sweeping an assertion, for many Christians have been taught that the Old Testament is mainly for the children of Israel and that only fragments of prophecy and the Psalms should be held as applicable to the Christian church. At least these words of Paul have disposed for all time of that notion. But even allowing that there is much more for Christians in the Old Testament than was at first supposed, can it be that “whatsoever written aforetime” is for us? Yes, it is even so; and Paul gives an example of this in 1 Cor. 9. 9-10 where he reasons that an item of the Mosaic law relative to the care of lower animals was in fact full of teaching for us and that the law concerning animals is secondary to its Gospel age application! In this Roman letter Paul is as good as his word, for when writing this letter he makes copious reference to the Old Testament, with the object that we who were Gentiles might obtain HOPE. True, not all quotations speak of hope, (some, indeed, tell of condemnation) but all are made so that the cumulative teaching removes all uncertainty of mind and gives eternal hope and comfort, being built upon that solid rock of truth, the Word of God. We who are not of Jacob may well be astonished that the law, the prophets, and the psalms, written by holy men of God and guarded so jealously through the centuries by the Jews find their primary fulfilment in promoting hope within us who once were aliens from the covenants of promise. And yet it is not so surprising, if we recall that to those very prophetic writers was revealed that they were ministering those things to us (1 Pet. 1. 12): and that when such faithful men as Daniel asked for further enlightenment upon the visions they were recording, it was said to them that the vision was for an appointed time and that at the end it would speak; that it was sealed till the time of the end. In agreement with this our Lord said to the disciples that many prophets and righteous men had desired to see the things which the disciples saw and had not seen them (Matt. 13. 16-17). Blessed were the eyes which saw at and since the First Advent; blessed because the One in whom so much prophecy centred had come; blessed because further additions to the Word of God confirming and amplifying the old writings were to be made; and blessed because the opening up of the prophetic word would give hope and joy to many hearts. Our Lord began his earthly ministry by quoting some words of Isaiah and adding “this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears”. Further prophecies were fulfilled during

his life and by his death; and thus He laid the foundation for Paul later to say that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we...might have hope”. *(Sept/ Oct 81)*

See
Page 74

Probable Reconstruction of the Period of the Judges

CLIMATE COLD, RAINY & LAND FERTILE				CLIMATE HOT, DRY, DROUGHT & FAMINE			
MITTANI		HITTITES		EGYPT		PHILISTINES & EASTERN TRIBES	
Joshua		Othniel		Barak & Deborah		Gideon	
OPPRESSIONS & JUDGES		Ehud				Jephthah Abdon	
						Elon Ishzon Jair	
						Samson Tola	
				Line of Eleazar			
ELEAZAR		PHINEHAS / ABISHWA		BUKKI / UZZI		ZADOK	
HIGH PRIESTS				Line of Ithamar		ELI/PHINEHAS/ABIMELECH	
Entry to land		Micah's Image Jud. 18		Ruth & Boaz		SAMUEL	
		War with Benjamin Jud. 19					
				Jud. 11.26,- 300 years from Entry		1 Kings 6.1 480 years from Exodus	
KINGS						Founding of Temple	
						SAUL DAVID	
1400 B.C.		1300 B.C.		1200 B.C.		1100 B.C.	
						1000 B.C.	

TIMES AND SEASONS

7. The Period of the Judges (Part b)

See chart on page 73

The first instalment, last issue, described the first two centuries of the Judges' rule, from the conquest under Joshua to the defeat of the Canaanites by Deborah and Barak, in the time of Rameses II and Merneptah, Pharaohs of Egypt.

The second half of the times of the Judges opens about the year 1200 BC, nearly two hundred years before David. The political domination of Canaan by the Hittites had long since passed away; the control exercised since then by Egypt had dwindled to a shadow, and Assyria had not yet arisen to threaten Israel. The twelve tribes could now, if they wished, become a powerful State in their own right and their own territory, able to resist all enemies—but it required a David to bring that about and David had not yet come. And Israel was still idolatrous. Some there were who were faithful to God and the Covenant, but the majority served the gods of the land, Baal and Moloch and Dagon. The Tabernacle at Shiloh, centre of national worship and the place of the Day of Atonement sacrifices, was probably at this very time the scene of an unknown disruption which resulted in the legal line of High Priests from Eleazer the son of Aaron being dispossessed in favour of a scion of the junior line of Ithamar. In the far north a rival sanctuary in Dan was served by apostate priests of the descendants of Moses where Jehovah was worshipped in the form of a graven image. All this meant that the penalty of the violated Covenant must again fall upon the people. And to all this has to be added the disastrous effect upon Israel from now onward of another important factor, that unpredictable element, the weather.

It would seem that no researcher, modern or ancient, into the Book of Judges has ever considered the possible relation between the events of those times and the prevailing weather. Not surprising, perhaps, since nothing is said about weather in the Book and in any case until quite recent years nothing was known about weather conditions in the ancient world. Things are different now. The researches of leading climatologists such as Brooks early in the last century and Lamb later on have established a fairly detailed picture of what our ancestors experienced in this field. With regard to the period in question, it is now known that about 1400 BC, just when Joshua was entering Canaan, there was a marked

world climatic change which introduced a cool and rainy era persisting for two centuries. For naturally dry and hot desert areas such as the Middle East this facilitated generally fertile and productive conditions well suited to the needs of nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples such as Israel and her neighbour nations. Agreeably to this, apart from the three relatively short periods of oppression from Chusan, Eglon and Jabin, described in Part a of this treatise, Israel enjoyed relatively long periods of “rest”, times in which the national life went on generally unmolested. In fact the general prosperity and productiveness of the land might well have contributed to the decline into idolatry so characteristic of this period. So soon as the champion, Othniel or Ehud or Barak, had delivered them from the oppressor they went back contentedly to their farms and their lives of relative ease.

All this was to change and it was the climate that did it. Round about the year 1200 BC, say the climatologists, there was another sudden and drastic change in world climate. The rainy phase ended and a hot, dry era commenced which continued for another two centuries until the year 1000 BC—the time of David. The second half of the period of the Judges was to be subject to this very different state of the weather.

This warmer and drier climate—which was world-wide—had its effect upon the semi-desert regions of the Middle East, and so upon the dwellers in those regions. Crop-growing became more difficult because of diminished rainfall. Pasture for cattle became more difficult to find. The nomadic desert tribes who depended for their food largely upon Nature’s wild-growing profusion found their supplies drying up, increasingly so as year succeeded year and the wilderness increasingly became desert. So they moved into the more settled territories where there were farmers with cultivated crops, and there were conflicts for food. In the first two centuries of Israel’s occupancy of Canaan her enemies were the forces of the great military empires; in these later two centuries it is noteworthy that the empires are there no more. The enemies now are raiding parties of miscellaneous tribes, Midianites, Amalekites, Philistines, and their chief purpose is not political control but food and land. The whole picture now is that of tribes and communities on the move, seeking new lands where they can find sustenance for themselves and their flocks. Throughout these two centuries there was no more peace for Israel; almost all the time they were fighting off one or another of the surrounding tribes endeavour-

ing to pillage their land and possessions. The most reasonable explanation for this sudden change in the affairs of Israel is to be found in the effect of this change of climate on their neighbours.

The first impact of this migration of peoples driven by hunger was the mass invasion of the central areas of Ephraim and Manasseh by the Midianites and “children of the east”—a general term for the Bedouin Arabs of the eastern regions—in the time of Gideon. The story in Judges 6 has all the signs of a starving multitude seeking food. They came across Jordan in their thousands, every year as soon as there were growing crops, and they “*destroyed the increase of the earth,...and left no sustenance for Israel....as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number...and Israel was greatly impoverished.*” (Judges 6. 4 -6) They came with their cattle and tents, and eventually they came to stay. And so it was until the angel of the Lord came to Ophrah and appeared to Gideon.

The story of Gideon is well known, how that with only three hundred hand-picked men he put a hundred and thirty-five thousand Bedouin to flight by means of an artifice and defeated them so thoroughly that they troubled Israel no more—in fact the Midianites never appear again in Old Testament history as an adversary of Israel. For the moment, at any rate, the central tribes were free from food-raiding aliens.

For a God-fearing stalwart like Gideon, there is a sad and somewhat puzzling sequel. He had, before the decisive battle, built an altar to the Lord at Ophrah, at the Lord’s behest, upon which he burned as an offering the appendages of Baal worship in his village (Jud. 6. 24-31). Now after this signal defeat of the Midianites he collected their gold and raiment and from these fabricated an ephod, the sacred jewelled garment with which the High Priest of Israel communed with God to receive Divine instruction. This looks very much as if Gideon was setting up a centre of worship to rival the only authorised one at Shiloh where the Tabernacle was situated, and the question must immediately arise; why did Gideon, a man of faith and hitherto fully loyal to God, do such a thing. He had only just refused the request of Israel to reign over them as king on the grounds that the Lord was their king and the only one who should reign over them. The narrative says that “*all Israel went...a whoring after it: which...became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house*” (Jud. 8. 27). One is led to wonder if

there is any connection between Gideon's apparently irreligious action and the unknown disruption which took the High Priesthood of Israel away from the legal line of Eleazar and gave it to the unauthorised line of Ithamar. No reason is given in the Old Testament for this transfer and there is not the slightest reference to it. Phinehas the grandson of Aaron is the last of Eleazar's line said to have been a High Priest and he died about a hundred and fifty years before Gideon. The next known High Priest is Eli, of the line of Ithamar, and he could have assumed office during Gideon's latter years. The descendants of Phinehas are recorded in the O.T. but no reference to their High Priesthood is made beyond Phinehas until Zadok in the time of David. Josephus, in his "*Antiquities*" (5. 11.5) does say that after Phinehas, his descendants Abishua (Abiezer), Bukki and Uzzi (Ozi) officiated as High Priests and after that the office passed to Eli; his authority for the statement is unknown. But if in fact the Midianite invasion and its aftermath in the time of Gideon did take place soon after the climatic change that inspired it, say about 1180-50, then Uzzi as an old man and Eli as a young man would fit in very well and Josephus's assertion looks very possible. Is it conceivable then that at this time there had been a kind of "power struggle" within the priesthood which resulted in the legal line vested in Uzzi being ousted and the unauthorised line, represented by Eli, taking his place? If such was the case, was Gideon's action an attempt to set up a separate sanctuary which could be served by the legal High Priest, Zerariah the son of Uzzi? It may have been a commendable idea, if so, but would not have the Lord's approval, for Shiloh was the place of his sanctuary, the Tabernacle, and He could be depended upon to rectify what man had done wrong—as in fact He did do in the days of Samuel. Be all this as it may, it must have been at about this time that the disruption occurred which placed Eli in office as High Priest, leading eventually to the corrupt state of the priesthood when later on Samuel appeared upon the scene.

So Gideon administered justice among the central tribes of Israel from his headquarters in Manasseh whilst either the young Eli or perhaps Eli's father officiated as High Priest at Shiloh. Manasseh and the north had peace for forty years, during which time Gideon died and his son Abimelech took power for three years. But while Manasseh and the northern tribes thus enjoyed a period of relative peace from the Midianites and peoples of the East, things were not so peaceful in the south.

The same climatic change which sent the Midianites scouring for food in central Israel also affected the Philistines in the south. Up to the days of Gideon, Israel had experienced no trouble with the Philistines; they kept themselves more or less to themselves. But about the time of this change, 1200 BC, the Philistines along the sea-coast had been caught up in a great wave of invaders by sea from the direction of Greece, the so-called “sea peoples”, who invaded the coastal lands of the Middle East in force, with their possessions, women-folk and children, also searching for somewhere to live and secure food and the necessities of life. This mass movement of strangers reached Egypt and was only stopped by Pharaoh Rameses II in a great sea battle and series of land engagements. The impact of all this sent the Philistines moving in the direction of likely areas of settlement and so they now began to come into conflict with Israel. From this time, about 1180 BC, to the reign of David two centuries later, the Philistines were a constant thorn in the side of Israel. The Old Testament records their conflicts with Samson, Samuel, Saul and David but it does not give the reason for their constant forays—their need for food and land in a time of increasing drought and famine. This is where Samson comes into the picture.

It is likely that Samson was born roughly soon after Gideon’s death, round about 1140 BC. The forty years of Philistine oppression, which affected only the south-western area of Israel where Samson was born, coincided partly with the end of Gideon’s forty years peace in central Israel, and partly with the following area of trouble, Gilead and the Ammonites, in which the Gileadite hero Jephthah figured. Eli would be High Priest, but his forty years’ judgeship over Israel had not yet commenced. It was said of Samson, not that he would deliver, but that he would “*begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*”. (Jud. 13. 5) and this came true. Samson harried the Philistines a great deal but Israel suffered under them the whole twenty years of his judgeship. It was David at the end who finally broke the Philistine power.

Nearly a century of the hot dry climate had now elapsed and the effect was beginning to be felt in Israel with enemies pressing on every side. It was the time of almost incessant conflict which was now developing which eventually led up to Israel’s demand to Samuel to make them a king. Despite the Covenant made at Sinai which constituted them a nation holy unto God, they were still no more than a loosely knit confederation

NOTICES

For the benefit of those who wish to keep the memorial of our Lord's death at the time nearest the anniversary, it is suggested that Thursday 29 March 2018 after 6 p.m. is the appropriate date and time.

BIBLE STUDENTS SEMINAR DAY

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FRIDAY 26-SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER 2018

Convention text 'You shall be holy, for I am holy' (1 Pet. 1. 15-16)

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of tribes, fighting each other as often as they were fighting outsiders. They were beginning to realise that they could only survive as a nation, but would not accept that nationhood in God's way. Most of them were still idolaters, so now, while Samson was alive and operating in the south-west

against the Philistines, it seems that other martial figures arose to do battle in other parts, Tola in Ephraim and Jair in Gilead on the east of Jordan, each fighting a different enemy who sought to invade the land (Jud. 10. 1-5). This, it would seem, led up to the last great oppression and victory of Israel before the dawn of the new era associated with the last and greatest of the Judges, Samuel.

According to Judges 10 the epoch of Gideon, of Tola and of Jair was followed by a time in which the apostasy of Israel was so great that the Lord “*sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon*” (Jud. 10. 6-9). This must of necessity coincide with the Philistine oppression of which Samson was the central character. At the same time, says the narrative, the Ammonites from the east invaded Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Gilead—virtually the whole of central and eastern Israel. The hapless Israelites were caught on both sides and the result appears to have been a national repentance in response to which God raised up a deliverer in the person of Jephthah the Gileadite (Jud. 11). Jephthah raised a force and carried the initiative into the enemies’ land, defeating the Ammonites so decisively that they ceased to be a threat to Israel for nearly a century, until the time of Saul.

This campaign of Jephthah against the Ammonites provides the only definite chronological link afforded by the Book of Judges. It occurred three hundred years after the Entry to the land (Jud. 11. 26), and so took place in 1113 BC or thereabouts. In so doing it brings the history into the period of Eli, Samuel and Saul, which have to be dated backwards from the known dates of Solomon and David. It follows that Eli was still High Priest and an old man, and that Jephthah’s expedition must have been at about the same time that the child Samuel was brought to the Tabernacle at Shiloh by his mother. After Jephthah came three more local heroes, Ibzan in Bethlehem just after Samson’s death, Abdon in Ephraim and Elon in the far north, Zebulun. Each probably fought the local enemies and ruled over local areas for a few years, and then as they passed away Samuel was coming into prominence as the last and the most noteworthy.

To be continued

AOH

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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Catch us the foxes, the little foxes,
that spoil the vineyards, for
our vineyards are in blossom.
(Song of Solomon 2. 15 RSV)

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV).

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Animals play a major part in human life. In British gardens and in our skies we hear and see our wild birds from the dawn of each day, our ponds and rivers are stocked with fish, our homes house our pets, and the farms that are stocked with cattle, sheep and chickens that provide food to our tables.

Foxes are controversial as well as becoming increasing familiar in suburban streets. According to the Woodland Trust there are about 258k adult foxes in the U.K. In previous generations they were seen as pests who would predate chickens and rabbits in the countryside where fox hunting with hounds became a popular activity for horse riders where people would try and outwit the wily fox and in consequence reduce the population of foxes. In 2005 in England and Wales fox hunting with hounds was banned as attitudes had changed and people living in towns and cities looked out for them as graceful wild animals.

In the Bible animals were used to describe the qualities of people. For example people are often described as sheep needing shepherds. Sheep are domesticated animals used to feed and clothe those rearing them. They needed to be protected from animals that would seek to kill and eat them. Peter was told to feed and care for the lambs and sheep (John 21. 15 -19) and he spent many years as a shepherd in the early church.

Lambs also are frequently referred to in the scriptures. Our Lord Jesus was described as “the lamb of God” “without spot or blemish” (John 1. 29-30; 1 Pet. 1. 18-19) . This language would be easily understood by the Jews because of the animal sacrifices in the Tabernacle and Temple arrangement. It illustrated that Messiah would not be a warrior-king but be a suffering servant.

Doves are generally portrayed as gentle, peaceful and helpless creatures. It is in this context that a dove was used at Jordan to tell the world that Jesus was the son of God.

Lions usually are used to signal danger and power as it does in Daniel 6. 16-24. Wolves are also used to signal danger as we are told to beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing. In addition Foxes also signify a more subtle type of danger. Herod was labelled a fox during Jesus’ first advent probably because he was cunning and greedy (Luke 13. 32).

In the days of the Judges there were many foxes in the land of Israel. This is why Samson used foxes as there were so many to be used and when tied together could not retreat to their dens or holes when tied in pairs (Judges 15). Jeremiah used Zion the well-known mount in Jerusalem to paint a picture of Jerusalem and the site of Solomon’s Temple in the 70 years of captivity in Babylon as being desolate with foxes. (Lam. 5 .18) The Temple needed rebuilding in the days of Zechariah following those years. It is interesting to note that Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, will visit Israel as the British mandate there ceased in May 1948 seventy years ago. Independence Day in Israel is 19 April.

When Solomon spoke of the foxes in the days of the kings of Israel (2. 15) he also would have known how plentiful they were and what damage they could do to vines. Such vines would have been knocked by the foxes who would eat the young fruit especially on the first and lowest branches. This can be taken as good advice to those Christians now to beware of cunning things which can look cute but will limit our fruitage. Such things can be many and varied but may include judging others and being impatient in our dealings with each other and in our communities.

TIS THE CRAFTY LITTLE FOXES—A HYMN

'Tis the crafty little foxes
 Stealing in so still and sly
 Tiny, prying, peeping fellows
 Seeking to escape your eye;
 These are daily mischief makers,
 Slyly working their designs,
 Till at last we learn the lesson:
 "Little foxes spoil the vines."



Chorus:

Little foxes, little foxes,
 Slyly working their designs
 'Tis these crafty little foxes
 Creeping in that spoil the vines.

Great big foxes could not enter,
 For we every one would spy;
 We're so watchful for the large ones
 They could never pass us by;
 But the small ones are so cunning
 That we think they do no harm;
 So the tender vines they damage
 Long before we feel alarm.

You must watch for "Little Cheater,"
 For he creeps in very still;
 "Didn't Think," and "Didn't Mean To,"
 Follow him the vines to kill.
 Then there is "Exaggeration,"
 Followed close by "Fibber" small;
 "Selfishness" and "Little Meddler"
 These are evil foxes all.

Every little heart's a garden,
 Planted by a hand divine;
 If these little foxes enter
 They will ruin every vine.
 We must ask the Lord to keep us
 And to help us every day;
 Then the vines will grow to fruitage
 And the foxes run away.

C.M. Seamans

THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS

“Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away” (Song of Sol 2. 10). The song of Solomon is poetry. It is not a treatise on doctrine, neither is it a book on prophecy. It should not be viewed as the visions of the prophets, symbolic pictures each element of which is intended to delineate some aspect of the future outworking of the Divine Plan. It is a poetic drama in which the two central characters sing and act the love which exists between them. But their singing and their acting faithfully mirrors the relationship which exists between Christ and his Church. Because of that there can be little doubt that this idyllic song is intended by the Holy Spirit to present to every lover of the Lord a picture of that relationship which could not be so well expressed in the more prosaic language of doctrine or even in the impassioned symbolism of prophecy. And for this reason it is possible to detect behind the poetry a shadowy image of the Church in her waiting time and the coming of her Lord to take her to himself.

Each little section of the song is one little cameo, presenting one or another aspect of that mystic relationship. Successive sections do not necessarily connect one with the other. Sometimes a section stands distinct by itself. Verses 8 to 13 of chapter 2 form one such distinct section, and the poetic picture it presents is one that is dear to the hearts of all the Lord’s disciples; the union of the Church with the Lord at the end of her experience in the flesh.

It may be nothing more than an analogy. It may only be a reading of already established doctrine into what is perhaps a poetic fantasy; but the application fits and if it can thus clothe an expectation already held with the delicate colours of a poetic reverie then it can in some small measure help to encourage and inspire in the Christian way.

“The voice of my beloved!” exclaims the Bride. She does not see him as yet, but she hears the tones of his voice speaking to her, calling to her, from beyond the Veil. He is coming, and she knows he is coming, and her heart thrills at the prospect *“Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, bounding (not “skipping”) on the hills.”* Here is an intimation not given us in the more sober prophetic descriptions of his Coming which denotes the eagerness, almost the impatience with which he comes at the Age’s end to claim his Bride. *“Behold, I come quickly”* he said to John

the Revelator. The prophet, watching diligently for his coming, cries out *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings....that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth”* (Isa. 52.7). *“His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives”* said Zechariah (14.4). This is the Lord on the way to take his Church to himself.

What is the first intimation of his arrival? Does he come along the broad high road, with sound of trumpets and a vast array of attendants? Does he come as in the parable, by night with lanterns and shouting, to the close-shut house where the Bride is waiting? Not in this delicate song does he thus come, *“Behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh in (not “forth”) at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice”* (vs.9). He comes quietly, unobtrusively, not with loud knock on the door, but as it were semi-hidden behind the house wall, seen only dimly through the curtains which shroud the windows. “Lattice”, the only occurrence of the word in the O.T., means a net or network, and probably refers to a window-covering which lets in the light but obscures clear sight. “Shewing” denotes to glance forth, to look by stealth, as through the holes of a veil. How better can one describe the initial unseen phase of his Advent, that span of time leading up to the full end of the Age, when the “watchers” realise by the signs of the times that the event is upon them and that the powers of Heaven are already intruding upon the affairs of men and gathering the nations to the battle of the great day of God Almighty? How better describe the coming of our Lord in his Divine spiritual glory into the world of men, this creation of space and time, to gather his Church silently and unnoticeably to himself? He is standing just out of sight behind the wall; but he is there. His form can just be made out behind the curtains, all but invisible; but he is there. Later on he will be fully manifested, for “every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1.7) but for the present he is unseen, there behind the wall, shrouded by the curtains, but he is there. *“I come as a thief”* He told John (Rev. 16.15) and a thief comes not through the door, but by means of the windows, as said Joel (2.9).

But though unseen the Bride hears his voice. *“Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth (their) fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away”* (vs. 10-13*). The time

has come for the Bride to be joined to her Bridegroom and taken to her new home, for the Church to leave this earthly scene and be “changed” to the glorious spiritual life and sphere which is to be her lot throughout eternity. This is the call which all who truly love the Lord are awaiting.

“The winter is past, the rain is over and gone.” What can the winter be but the whole of human history from the Fall, this dark time of man’s subjection to the “rain”—sin and all its consequences in misery, disease, death. In the days of Noah the wickedness of men was so great that God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of men’s hearts was only evil, and that continually. In the days of Abraham, the world was given to idolatry and the Lord could find only one man for his purpose. When Moses met with the Lord on Sinai and made a covenant with God on Israel’s behalf, it was not long before Israel had broken and repudiated the covenant. Christ appeared, and the nation to whom He appeared rejected him. During the whole of this present Age, of all those who have taken the name of Christ the many have been apostates and only the few faithful. The rain has been heavy and continuous and the winter has been long, but now the winter is past and the rain is over and gone; the genial days of summer are at hand.

“The flowers appear on the earth.” These are the signs of the Millennial reign of Christ due to commence directly he has taken his Church to himself. The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose, says Isaiah. The sunlit beauty of Eden will return and the dark days be no more. Both Ezekiel and John saw the vision of the River of Life flowing from the dwelling place of God, and the Trees of Life on either side nourished by the waters of the river and yielding fruit for the spiritual sustenance of mankind and leaves for their healing.

“The time of the singing of birds is come”. There are two occasions when the singing of birds is more than usually noticeable. One is in the early dawn when the light of a new day is commencing to overspread the earth and the birds herald it with the well-known ‘dawn chorus’. The other is in the springtime when the world is entering upon its annual time of the springing up of new life. So it is here; the Dawn of the New Day, the coming of what will be for all mankind the acceptable year of our Lord, the promised Times of Restitution of all things, this is heralded by the singing of birds. And what is this singing? There are two Hebrew words

used to express the act of singing. One is *rinnah* which denotes singing in general without the particular kind of song and the other is *zamir* which means to sing praises. And here in this text it is the word *zamir* that is used. The singing of praises is here intended. Who are they who sing praises at the dawn of the Millennial (new) Age. “*Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, the LORD returning to Zion*” (Isa. 52.8*). There is a wonderful vision in the 14th chapter of Revelation in which the entire Church in the flesh is pictured as standing on Mount Zion singing a new song which no man could learn save those who are Christ’s and have pledged themselves to his service; and that song is the prelude to a series of world-wide messages starting with the announcement of the coming Kingdom, and calling on men to believe because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, continuing with the declaration of judgment upon the anti-Christian institutions of the world, and concluding with the revelation of our Lord at his Second Advent coming in royal power to conduct the harvest of the Age, the gathering of his saints, and the execution of Divine judicial condemnation upon all that opposes his Kingdom. This is the song, the whole content of dispensational truth, “Present Truth” as Peter called it (2 Pet. 1.12) due to be proclaimed at this end of the Age. In very truth, the time of the singing of birds has come.

“*And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land.*” (RSV) The voice of the dove was heard on one memorable occasion in the past. When Jesus left the baptismal waters of Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended upon him “in bodily shape like a dove” and there came a voice from heaven “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. That is the only instance in all the Scriptures of the Holy Spirit being likened to an earthly creature. The voice of the dove; the voice of the Holy Spirit. Nothing at all that the disciples of Christ have proclaimed or achieved in this closing period of the Age could have been so done without the underlying inspiring and energising power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord told his disciples that he would be with them, even to the end of the Age. He further said that although he must needs in his personal presence return to his Father he would nevertheless send them the Holy Spirit which would abide with them until he should again be present at his Second Advent. So the Holy Spirit has been the channel of Divine guidance and revelation through all the centuries of Christian history until the present. The knowledge we have of the Divine Plans for mankind, the knowledge of our own place

and service in those plans; the knowledge of the imminence of our Lord's coming again and all the changes that are associated therewith; all this has been imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, which our Lord said would guide us into all truth and show us things to come. Truly the voice of the turtle-dove has been heard in our land.

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs." For many centuries it has been recognised that in Scripture the fig tree is used in prophetic symbol to present God's earthly covenant people, Israel. Examples of this appear in Jer. 24.1-8, Joel 1.7,12 and Hosea 9.10. Our Lord used the same symbol in his parable of the fruitless fig tree in Luke 13.6-7 and an obvious prophetic allusion in Matt. 24.32-33. Now this fig tree is putting forth her green figs. Under normal conditions a great many unripe figs remain on the tree throughout the winter and then ripen very early the following year, becoming large and ready for plucking in March or April, just as the new leaves begin to appear and Spring is at hand. These figs were called *paq*, green figs, to distinguish them from the later summer crop. Here it is said that the fig tree "putteth forth" her green figs. This word "putteth forth" is *chanat* which means to mature or preserve. It is used only four other times in the O.T. and there rendered "embalm". So we have come to a time which the fig tree has matured her fruit, which has been developing throughout the winter but in an unripe condition; now it is spring and the fruit is ripe and mature and ready for use. What better picture is there of Israel being regathered and made ready for her future Millennial work, Jesus said that when we saw the fig tree putting forth her leaves we were to know that the time is at hand; this is what he meant. The prophet Habakkuk vowed that even if the fig tree did not blossom and no fruit appeared on the vine he would still believe and expect the Kingdom of Heaven in God's due time; in this our day we see the sign of the fig tree which assures us that his faith was not misplaced. So, now that the singing of the birds and the voice of the turtle-dove have given their testimony to the imminence of the Day of Christ, the maturing of the green figs adds an outwardly perceptible testimony to the verity (truth) of all that the Scriptures foretell.

"The vines are in blossom; they give forth (their) fragrance." (RSV) Here is something that must come to its fruition in a later season. The fig trees are bearing their fruit but the vines as yet are only in blossom; the time of harvesting the fruit is a little later on. But the blossom is giving forth its

fragrance, an earnest of that which is to come. In Old Testament days the vine also was a symbol of Israel, but a vine that had to be rejected and cast away because it failed to bring forth fruit (Isa. 5.1-6; Jer. 2.21-22; Hos. 10.1). Our Lord gave this theme a New Testament setting and declared that the highest calling of all, to be joint heirs with Christ in the heavens, was denied them because of that failure and the privilege given to the Christian Church of this present Age. (Matt. 21.33-41). So the vines which are now in blossom and giving forth their fragrance are the members of the Church, believers in Christ, dedicated to his service and endeavouring in all ways to be conformed to his likeness. The time of fruitage is not yet; the Master Reaper has not yet gathered his own into the heavenly storehouse. We are still in the flowering stage but that is evidence that the time of harvest is not very far away. And it does not take very much imagination to sense that the fragrance can only be the fruits and graces of the Spirit which we, the branches of the Vine (John 15.5) are developing within ourselves and manifesting to others around us while life endures, “*The fruit of the Spirit*” says our mentor, Paul, “*is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*” (Gal. 5.22-23). These things constitute the fragrance which the vine blossoms give forth now; in a later day the fruit of the vine will be for the life of all mankind, for the “*Spirit and the bride say, Come...And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*” (Rev. 22.17) The earnest expectation of the creation, says Paul again, waits for the manifestation of the Sons of God.

So, our beloved One stands there, behind the wall, looking in at the windows, hidden from sight by the curtains, but—he is there. He has come to call his own to himself, to take them and present them before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy, to accompany them into that wonderful but unimaginable experience which the Book of Revelation calls the marriage of the Lamb, preparatory to appearing with them to all the world for the world’s salvation. He comes, at last, to take his Church to himself and so set in motion that chain of events which is to characterise the final end of human probation and culminate in the fulfilment, at last, of the Church’s age-old prayer “Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven”. He stands there, behind the wall, and his accents come, soft and low, but pregnant with meaning, “*Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away*”.

TWW

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

3. The Cleansing of the Priest

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him” (ch. 3. 1 R.S.V.).

A new vision appears. The wide view of Jerusalem is gone; the prophet stands in spirit, probably in the Court of the Temple, witnessing a ceremony which seems to have much in common with the Levitical consecration of the High Priest. Joshua was High Priest in the days of Zechariah, the spiritual head of the nation just as Zerubbabel was its secular head. Now Zechariah sees this man standing before the Lord, arrayed in unclean garments, and Satan present to accuse him before God. The accusation is rejected; the Lord commands that Joshua be clothed in new and clean garments and a diadem placed upon his head. Then comes a solemn charge. If Joshua will faithfully discharge the duties of his priestly commission he will inherit an enduring place in the company of God’s ministers. And he is to prefigure the Messiah who will come in the fullness of time to lead the nation into the promised era of righteousness and peace when every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree with none to make them afraid. (Micah 4. 4).

It is logical to think that the vision was intended to have an immediate although limited application to Israel in Zechariah’s day, even although its major significance has to do with the wider aspects of the Divine Plan. Thus Joshua in his “filthy garments” fitly pictured the defiled priesthood and Temple worship, consequent upon Israel’s captivity in Babylon and the desecrated Temple. Satan, standing to accuse him, symbolised the hostility of the surrounding nations anxious to induce the Persian power to withdraw its support of the newly established Jewish State. But here God steps in. *“The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan”* he says *“is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”* (ch. 3. 2). Israel at this time, so recently delivered from Babylon, was in very truth a brand plucked out of the fire. So Joshua is clothed with new garments and crowned with a diadem as a symbol of the restored State and new glory of the returned exiles. This indeed was a fresh start for Israel; now, at last, the failures and apostasies of those five centuries when the kings reigned could be forgotten and the nation go forward to its destiny. So the charge to Joshua (ch. 3. 7); if he should walk

in God's ways and keep God's charge, then his rulership should be confirmed forever. He would see the fulfilment of the old-time prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning the emergence of a "branch" of David, a descendant of David's line, who should rule as both King and Priest. The outcome was to be the removal of the iniquity of the land and the eternal peace and prosperity of its inhabitants.

The golden vision was never realised. True, the Temple was built and for a while the zeal of the people for their God was great; probably the lifetime of Joshua was marked by a continuing national allegiance to the covenant. But old sins of cupidity, lawlessness and irreverence were still under the surface; by the time of Ezra fifty years later the nation had relapsed into its old ways, and corruption had penetrated into the priesthood. Ezra's notable prayer on the occasion of his coming to Jerusalem (Ezra 9&10) highlights the situation. "*O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens*" (Ezra 9. 6). It is true that Ezra brought about a national revival and reform, but that was short-lived. Thirteen years later Nehemiah was appointed governor of Judah and found that all Ezra's work had been undone and Jerusalem was again a desolation. For twelve years he ruled and laboured among a fickle and at heart unbelieving people; but at the end of the twelve years he was recalled to Persia and immediately the nation relapsed again. He returned to Jerusalem subsequently and instituted further reforms, but as with Joshua, so with Nehemiah, after his death the light went out, priests and people alike abandoning all pretence of serving God and belief in the high destiny of their nation. So the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy in the person and work of Joshua and the generation he served as High Priest was not realised because of unfaithfulness and unfitness; the only possible fulfilment is that which runs its course through the Christian Dispensation and the one that follows, the Millennial Era in which the climax of Zech. 3 finds its reality.

It would seem, then, that this chapter takes us away from the background and the events of the prophet's own day and leads irresistibly into the future. The climax of the vision, the emergence of the "Branch"—a title the Scriptures confine to the Lord Christ in his Messianic glory—the removal of iniquity, and the Millennial setting of verse 10, all point to this. Hence Joshua the High Priest, clothed in unclean garments which are

taken away and replaced by clean ones, is clearly a figure of the Christian Church of this Age in process of cleansing and fitting for her future work in the next Age.

On this basis the elements of the vision fall into place. The central figure is the Royal Priesthood of the Millennial Age. A great deal of Old Testament imagery pictures our Lord uniting within himself the combined offices of King and Priest. The Psalmist lays down the principle that when that Age dawns Christ is to be a *“priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”* (Psa. 110. 4). That is a reference back to the Genesis story of the Priest-King of Salem (Jerusalem) in Abraham’s day, the story which the seventh chapter of the book of Hebrews uses so effectively to picture the work of Christ at his Second Advent. Whereas at his First Advent and in his sacrificial role, He was prefigured by the order of Aaron, a sacrificing and a dying priesthood, at his Second Advent and in the power of his glory he appears as a royal priest, a Priest-King, after the order of Melchizedek. But the New Testament shows that He is not alone in this; there is to be associated with him in that restorative work among mankind of the future Age the company of his faithful disciples of this Age, the Christian Church, those who in Rev. 17. 14 are said to be *“called, and chosen, and faithful”*. And it is the Book of Revelation, which indicates that this same Christian Church is to be considered as sharing with her Lord the honoured title of the Royal Priest-King. He *“hath made us kings and priests unto God”*. *“They (that have part in the first resurrection) shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”* (Rev. 1. 6; 20. 6). Joshua, standing in an unclean condition, can fitly picture the company of his disciples who, after cleansing, ultimately become part of the “Royal Priest”. Hence verses 1-3 of Zech. 3 can logically represent the Church of this Age standing, by virtue of the consecration of its members to God, in the presence of the Lord, the “angel of the LORD (Jehovah)” of verse 1, clothed with unclean garments, the defiling influence of sin, which is now to be taken away. The clothing with “change of raiment” (verse 4) is easily seen to represent the being *“arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”* (Rev. 19. 8). Justification, reconciliation with God, the life of sanctification and dedication to the High Calling, all this is what is involved in this being arrayed in a change of raiment. How apt in this context are the words of verse 4 *“I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment”*.

Satan, the enemy of Joshua, is equally the enemy of all who would enter into a covenant of service with the Lord. It is noteworthy that he disappears from the vision so soon as the Lord's reproof is uttered. So in the reality, the Prince of Evil has great power and influence in the world of men but the power of the Lord is greater and every "brand snatched from the burning" and brought to Christ is immune from the Adversary's devices.

Who are "*those that stood before him*" (i.e. before the angel of Jehovah, the Lord) in verse 4? These are the ones who actually strip the unclean garments from Joshua and array him in the new ones. Probably, just as Satan represents the powers of evil that would endeavour to keep Christian disciples in the way of sin, so "those that stood before" the Lord represent his ministers, whoever they are and from whencesoever they come, who are the instruments employed by the Lord in his work of transforming the hearts and lives of the believers, which is the real fulfilment of the change of garments. What has often been called "the ministry of angels" might well have its place here.

Now comes the indication of royalty, of a "*fair mitre*"—more accurately, a brilliant diadem—being placed on the head of Joshua. It is sometimes thought that this is the "mitre" which formed part of the Levitical priests'—Aaron's—regalia, but the word used makes it more likely that a royal crown or diadem is intended, as in Isa. 62. 3 "*Thou shalt...be...a royal diadem in the hand of thy God*". The symbol could well speak of the insignia of royalty which the prospective "Royal Priesthood" even now possesses, whilst still in this life. "*Ye are...a royal priesthood*" (1 Pet. 2. 9). So the Christian Church, as yet but a prospective heir to the glory that shall be revealed, stands in clean garments and with a royal diadem, acceptable in God's sight.

That commission is stated in verses 6-7. "*The angel of the LORD enjoined Joshua, Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here*" (R.S.V.). Now this appears to envisage the discharge of a present duty as the essential preliminary to receiving certain administrative authority, and entering into a place or joining a company which stands in close relation to God. It ought not to be difficult to discern the

application. The injunction laid upon all who come to the Lord as members of his Church is both to walk in his ways and keep his charge, Consecrated Christians of this Age, having been faithful to their calling and having learned well all that the Divine Providence in the circumstances of life has taught them, will be privileged in the next Age with duties of oversight and instruction of the whole race of mankind then to be called to repentance and reconciliation. The final phrase is then the obvious comment. These who are thus found fitted and qualified for eternal association with the Lord in his future works are destined to be with him, translated from this terrestrial world to that which is outside the range of human sense, but which is nevertheless the home of radiant beings always and altogether devoted and active in the service of God. Dr. Moffatt may have had more than a flash of insight when he rendered this particular sentence *"I will give you right of access to this company of mine"*. Whatever the precise meaning of the original, it is a definite assurance that the faithful are eventually to be admitted to a condition of being, of life, an eternal home, which is in the presence of God and of those who, metaphorically perhaps, stand before his Throne.

Now comes the inspiring sequel to the vision, one that reveals in a few simple phrases the inflexible purpose of God to remove evil from the world and lead mankind into a condition of everlasting contentment. *"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at..."* (ch. 3. 8). This is the prelude to a most important announcement; but first of all the characters thus addressed have to be identified. If Joshua the high priest is a picture of the Church in the flesh, who then are "thy fellows that sit before thee", "men wondered at"? It is not easy to find a class of men in this present order of things who can fitly be described as "fellows" to the disciples of Christ. The qualifying expression "men wondered at" is difficult to apply; the Hebrew word means a miracle or a sign but the context would certainly not be satisfied by describing them as "miracle men". Every translator has his own slant on this phrase; thus the R.S.V. renders *"your friends... men of good omen"*, Dr. Young *"Men of type are they"*, Leeser *"distinguished men are they"*, Rotherham *"men to serve as signs"*, and Ferrar Fenton *"they are witnessing men"*. Now most of these expressions have been from time to time applied to Israel, the nation that was God's witness in the world and became not only a sign to all men of Divine power but a type of the later arrangement in Christ which was to come after his First

Advent. Even the expression “miracle men” would not be out of place; the survival of that nation throughout history despite all that has endeavoured to destroy it, and its territorial resurgence in this our own day, has frequently been described as a miracle. And the fact that both Joshua and the “men wondered at” are bidden to heed the Lord’s declaration that He will bring forth his servant the “Branch”, and none among men save the Christian Church and believing Israel could have the faintest idea of the meaning of that expression, goes far to encourage the conclusion that this is the understanding intended.

“For, behold” says the Lord *“I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH”* (ch. 3. 8). The “Branch” in Scripture metaphor is Christ—at his Second Advent and during his Millennial reign. It has its origin in the fact that Jesus, as a man, came in descent of the line of David and so fulfilled in his own person the prediction that Messiah would come of David’s seed. Thus we have Isa. 11. 1. *“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, (David’s father) and a Branch shall grow out of his roots”*. The rest of this chapter describes the Millennial rule of Christ and its beneficent consequences for men. Says Jeremiah 23. 5 *“The days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth”*. Again the same prophet declares (ch. 33. 15) *“In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land”*. From these allusions it is obvious that Zech. 3. 8 relates to the establishment of the Millennial administration upon earth, in which both the Church and regathered Israel, the heavenly and earthly instruments of world conversion in God’s hand, will occupy significant positions.

“For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree” (ch. 3. 9-10).

A stone, having seven “eyes”, engraved by the hand of God, becoming the means of removal of evil, resulting in men calling or inviting their fellows to the shelter of the vine and fig tree. The Hebrew word here rendered “stone” (*eben*) may equally refer to a precious stone, a pebble or

a boulder of granite. The context has to decide. In this case the background is that of the coming Millennial Kingdom and immediately the “stone...cut out of the mountain without hands” of Daniel 2. 34 & 45, this same Millennial Kingdom, comes to mind. The “stone set before Joshua” could well symbolise this same Kingdom. The usage of the term “engraving” is perhaps not too happy a one; “*Pathach*”, means primarily to open a thing, as a door, a book, the gate of a city, or to loose a thing, as bonds or girdles, and only secondarily to engrave. In fact it is rendered “Open” some 80 times and “engrave” only twice. It may be therefore that having “set”, or established, the stone which symbolises the Kingdom, the Lord throws it open for all who will to enter, much as the gates of the holy city of Rev. 21. 25, are thrown open to redeemed humanity. This would make sense of the succeeding phrase “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day”, for the entrance to the “stone” kingdom being thus thrown open the logical consequence is the conversion and reconciliation of mankind in the Millennial Day.

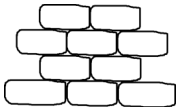
The seven eyes are significant. In chapter 4. 10 they are referred to as the “*eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth*”. This idea of the all-seeing supervision of his creation by the Most High is very prominent in Scripture. “*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*” says the writer of Proverbs (15. 3). Elihu, that far-sighted young man in the days of Job, said “*his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings*” (Job 34. 21). A little known seer, Hanani of Judah, warned King Asa “*the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth*”, (2 Chron. 16. 9). And in more poetic frame the Revelator sees the “*seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth*” (Rev. 5. 6; Rev. 1. 4). These expressions indicate God’s awareness of all that goes on in his creation; as the writer to the Hebrews says, “*all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*” (Heb. 4. 13). This does not imply that there are seven literal dissociated eyes travelling over the earth’s surface to behold what is going on. The seven is the symbol of completeness, and the seven eyes picture the many-sided and universal Divine perception from which nothing is hid. In point of fact “*ayin*” can equally well mean “aspect” or “face of” and is used in these senses frequently in the Old Testament. It is probably more logical to think that what Zechariah saw in the vision was not a boulder of rock adorned with representations of seven human optic organs, but rather a seven sided

stone block, a stone having “seven facets” as some translators put it, so that one-seventh of the stone faced in each of seven directions. Thus would be well symbolised the Divine supervision of the Kingdom, seeing and ruling in every direction.

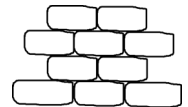
So the stone comes to rest on the ground before Joshua; the Kingdom is established on earth, Joshua and his fellows are ready, and the Millennial work commences. *“In that day”* as Rotherham *“Ye shall invite one another, to come under the vine and under the fig-tree”* or the LXX *“ye shall call together every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree”* or, again, the R.S.V. *“In that day, says the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbour under his vine and under his fig tree”*. The essence of this final scene in the vision is the fact of invitation. Vine and fig tree are symbols of the Millennial Age; in that day men will invite their fellows to share in the blessings of that Age. The basic principle is laid down in Rev. 22. 17 *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”*. This is the time when all men everywhere will have the opportunity to hear and accept the grace of God in Christ and progress, if they will, to a condition of full reconciliation with God and entry into the eternal state of the blessed. It will be by invitation and not of constraint; by persuasion and not of command. But the prospect is that of a world in which sin and evil are done away; the progress and development of the sons of men unhindered and untrammelled by violence, fear, selfishness, disease or death. Man will, at last, have attained his place in creation.

To be continued

AOH



THE GRANITE WALL



I came against a granite wall—
It would not break nor bend;
I tried to get around it, but
It seemed there was no end;
I tried to climb up over it,
But its sides—they were too steep;

Then I tried to dig beneath it, but
Its foundation was too deep:
I took my problem to the Lord,
I left it in His care;
And when I sought that wall again—
It wasn't even there!

Poems of Dawn

PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Part 9



The Sacrificial Life is Misunderstood

One whole Christian life is to be one of sacrifice, that our brethren in the Lord, and afterwards the world of mankind, may benefit. It is more blessed to give than to receive. We shall therefore give God our heart and homage. We shall give Jesus our trust and fellowship, and our love, for we are to be his Bride. We shall give our brethren our strength, and lay down our lives for them. And being planted together in the likeness of our Lord's death, we shall be baptised on behalf of the dead world (Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor. 15:29). The great driving power which will enable us to do all this is love out of a pure heart. Of course our love will be misunderstood, as was the love of Jesus. This is one of the principle reasons why it is necessary for us to pray. We are so prone to be discouraged when our loving acts, looks and words are misinterpreted, wrong motives even being applied to them, that we must pray to God earnestly that we shall have the necessary strength, the power of the Holy Spirit to maintain this Christ-like attitude.

Experienced Christians know that it takes the mighty power of God within to enable them to be steadfast in pure and fervent love. But none need despair, because we keep up our communication with God in Christ Jesus' name, the power will surely come. And remarkable though it is we shall find that we can actually continue our loving acts, looks and words even toward those who misunderstand them most! We shall be astonished ourselves to find how comparatively easy it is. It is prayer that brings this stupendous power. God cannot transmit it to us unless we keep up the connecting wires of prayer. Every one knows that when the wire is broken, electric energy cannot be transmitted. Every Christian should know that unless he is in direct connection with the Lord who is the source of spiritual power, he cannot get the necessary forces into his life to make him a channel of blessing to others—the real purpose of a Christian life. For in its truest sense prayer is not so much on our own behalf, but on behalf of others. We need not imagine that we can generate this power within ourselves. It comes from above. Jesus expressly said; "Apart from me, ye can do nothing." We simply cannot get power to flow out of us to bless, unless we keep unbroken our "prayer-wire" with God so that power may flow into us. It must flow in first, and fill us up, and

then it shall flow out to others and give them all the blessings we can possibly desire.

We likened prayer to a wire, through which stupendous power comes from God to ourselves. But is it necessary to have stupendous power? It is indeed! The Bible does not say in vain: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). The general who successfully leads his armies and captures strongly fortified positions is rightly applauded and honoured, for it requires no mean mental power to perform such leadership. The Scripture quietly says, however, that the man who can rule his own spirit is mightier than a great general. This is not a vain saying; it is true!

“Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself” (Heb. 12:3). Christ Jesus was the only one who could rule his own spirit all the time in harmony with his Father’s will. We are enabled to rule our spirit as we yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit of love. It is a gradual growth in our case, and requires patience to cultivate. By means of prayer we gain the necessary power. Now, all this is in strict line with God’s glorious Plan of the Ages, and is therefore according to his will. For we are God’s prospective priests and kings, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, and foreknown by God from before the foundation of the world. We must be prepared unto good works, and we can thus pray that everything necessary, whether it be things spiritual or natural, shall be granted to enable us to prepare for the work of blessing all the families of the earth as Abraham’s Seed (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:29). The saying of Jesus: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,” takes on a deeper meaning. We perceive that we cannot successfully ask for anything except as we are in Christ the anointed, and unless Christ’s words, which are God’s words, that is, God’s expression of his great Plan of Salvation, dwell in us (Col. 3:16). “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17*).

ME

Next time—Hindrances to Prayer

* *Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col. 3:17 ESV)*

JUDGE NOT

A word to search the heart

It is timely that we should reconsider the Scriptural teaching on the subject of judging and judgment, for if we obtain the wrong viewpoint we can inflict grievous injury upon others as well as doing ourselves serious harm. As all know, there are various shades of thought in the original which must be clearly distinguished, and the essential theme of our present meditation is the definite Scriptural injunction to refrain from condemnation of others. If we fall into this snare we are anticipating our future work before qualified to engage in that work.

Even in human affairs the procedure is very clear. Judges are selected from practising barristers (in this land), and the honour of being one of Her Majesty's High Court judges does not come until towards the end of a brilliant legal career. No one would for a moment endeavour to deliver judgment other than the judge on the Bench, for to do so would be to offend against long-established custom and all rules of proper procedure. Moreover, the judge himself does not pass sentence until he has heard all the evidence on both sides; with his trained mind he is able to sift that evidence and pronounce judgment accordingly. Let us apply these principles to the spiritual life.

It is understood that the new creation this side of the veil are in training to qualify for the exaltation to the Throne of the Kingdom from whence they will judge both men and angels. It is for this reason, among others, that various experiences come to them in the School of Christ whereby they may learn to develop the faculty of judgement. No one during his training is competent to exercise the functions of the office for which he hopes to qualify, hence why should we try to judge, in the sense of condemning, while in our training days?

There are several good reasons why we should not condemn others. Firstly, we cannot read the heart and, following the illustration given above, we are unable to have access to all the evidence. Time and again we make decisions which we afterwards find to be unsound because they are based on inadequate premises. If our decisions have manifested themselves in condemnation, then we often have occasions of sadness as we think of our immaturity; if full of grace, we do at least endeavour to

apologise so that our brother may not be stumbled. Again, even supposing we had all the evidence before us, it must be appreciated that our judgment is faulty; even the best of us can be mistaken, and at times we are woefully deceived. Moreover, our knowledge of the law by which God judges us is far from perfect and if we do not have a thorough grasp of the law in question—the law of love—it is obvious that we cannot administer that law. (The function of an earthly judge is to know the law and administer its provisions.)

Among the many things which tend to stumble the Lord's people is this tendency to condemn others because they may not agree fully with us—not only on matters of doctrine, but on conduct and their course in life generally. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7: 1-2). This outlook of condemnation inevitably tends to discourage, yea, to stumble others. Indeed, it is one of the many causes of the neglect of some to assemble together with those of like precious faith; they mistakenly feel that they are better at home instead of using that important means of grace—the ecclesia (church)—for the development of the new creature.

In any event, condemnation can do no good at all. The Heavenly Father and the Son—the latter as the Father's representative—have the honour of judgment, and the Church, will not share that honour until glorified. In many cases, the power of the message of truth is weakened because those who wield it do so in an unchristian-like manner, and those who would otherwise heed, neglect to hear because prejudiced by what seems to them to be a spirit entirely foreign to the truth itself. Charles Russell aptly writes:- "The fallen or carnal mind is selfish; and proportionately as it is for self it is against others—disposed to approve or excuse self and to disapprove and condemn others...This habit is the more pronounced with advanced education. The mind recognises higher ideals and standards and forthwith measures every one by these, and, of course, finds something at fault in all. It delights in rehearsing the errors and weaknesses of others, while ignoring its own along the same or other lines,—and sometimes, even, hypocritically denouncing the weaknesses of another for the very purpose of hiding its own or giving the impression of superior character along the line in question."

Time and again, we hear brethren assigned to the Great Company class. (Rev. 7: 9) The writer has been so assigned himself on occasions, and this is specifically mentioned in order to emphasise the lesson before us. Moreover, this final condemnation is often called forth because of some more or less trivial difference of viewpoint not affecting the fundamental features of the “faith once delivered.” This manifestly shows narrow-mindedness associated with ignorance and weak judgment. Is such a description in itself condemnation? This brings us to the next point.

Let no one misunderstand these observations. While we must avoid condemnation of others, we must nevertheless be positive characters knowing what is right as regards both doctrine and conduct. But instead of condemning let us be an example of the believers, in line with our positive outlook, for example is far more forceful than precept, and when precept is couched in terms of condemnation it is worse than useless.

We need to develop discernment, but this is a different kind of judgment from that of condemnation. The Apostle everywhere counsels that we be no longer children in the faith—tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. On the contrary, we must grow so as to appropriate to ourselves the “strong meat” of the word which “belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5: 14). We should give a bold witness for the truth, and refuse to compromise the message on any grounds whatsoever. The same Apostle Paul who is so outstanding in this respect also said: “It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (1 Cor. 4: 3-5).

There is a vast difference between criticism and condemnation, especially when the criticism is constructive. The saintly writers of the Scriptures frequently criticised those to whom they ministered; the Apostle Paul often spoke very plainly, as also did the prophets of old down to John the Baptist, while, above all, our Lord Himself made His witness very plain and clear. Even here, however, it is necessary to observe discretion and to

follow the example of criticising wrong systems of teaching and unwise practices, rather than venting our criticism on individuals.

If we find it necessary to utter a word of criticism it must be spoken in love because it is designed to do good—to assist and not to stumble. If we witness definitely against systems and methods which we find to be unscriptural, then the individuals will readily heed if rightly exercised, whereas the personal method might not appeal at all.

We all probably think first and foremost of condemnation in relation to doctrine because this spirit of condemnation is so evident in this respect. But let us also emphasise the same wrong attitude in connection with conduct. The Apostle counsels: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6: 1). While avoiding condemnation, it frequently happens that we feel it our Christian duty to point out in love certain apparently wrong courses taken by those who are brethren. To refrain from speaking would be to fail in our duty, yet it must be done in the spirit of meekness for the reason given by the Apostle.

There is a general tendency today towards slackness in this Laodicean period, (Rev. 3: 14-22) but we often find on investigation that what we have taken to be slackness has been the very reverse. The writer realised this forcibly when one such an experience came his way, and the one whom he endeavoured to help remarked: “You only see my failures; you do not know of my successes, and how hard it is to overcome this fault.” How striking! How cautious it should make us in dealing with others, yet ever remember that this does not give any authority for failure to perform our duty by others.

Never can we know the obstacles against which others have to contend. The Lord alone knows and can judge righteously. Finally, here is another pertinent comment:

“But few of the Lord’s people realise to what extent they judge others, and that with a harshness which, if applied to them by the Lord, would surely bar them from the Kingdom. We might have feared that, under our Lord’s liberal promise that we shall be judged as leniently as we judge others, the tendency would be to too much benevolence, too much mercy, and that ‘thinketh to evil’ might be carried to an extreme. But no!

All the forces of our fallen nature are firmly set in the opposite direction. It is more than nineteen centuries since our Lord made this generous proposal to judge us as leniently as we will judge others, and yet how few could claim much mercy under that promise!”

Selected



Disappointment—His appointment

Disappointment is like one of those sharp showers which sometimes burst on the garden out of a clear spring sky. For a minute or so the driving rain beats down, and the bright flowers which a moment before were lifting up their heads to the gay sunshine are wilting and bending beneath the crushing load. But the shower passes, and the sun shines down again upon flowers that are bent indeed beneath their load of bright raindrops, but are giving forth a fresh fragrance that could never have been distilled from them without that short tribulation.

“Disappointment—His appointment,
Change one letter, then I see
That the thwarting of my purpose
Is God’s better way for me.”

May 1944



HEROD ANTIPAS

The New Testament and Josephus’ *Antiquities* xviii constitute the main historical sources for Herod Antipas, who is commonly remembered for his role in the execution of John The Baptist (Matt. 14. 1-12). He inherited his father’s political cunning, which may have been why Jesus referred to him as “that fox” (Luke 13. 32)

HERODIAS (a feminine form of Herod)

The daughter of Aristobulus and granddaughter of Herod The Great and Mariamne. Herodias inherited the ruthlessness of her grandfather and the royal blood of her grandmother’s Hasmonean forbears.

The Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible, G. Wicoder

PATIENCE

It can be safely assumed that all students of the Bible, and in particular of the New Testament, know that in the latter the Greek word “hupomene” occurs frequently and is of great importance. It occurs 30 times and is generally translated “patience”, but this does not give its full meaning. The verb that corresponds occurs 15 times and is normally translated “endure”. Thus, we have become accustomed to “patient endurance” being nearer the true meaning. In this study, however, we hope to see that it’s even fuller significance will be discerned by its close association with other Christian virtues. That our subject deals with a very important Christian quality is stressed by such words as: “Ye have need of patience” (Hebrews 10:36) and “Let patience have her perfect (maturing) work”. (James 1:4).

Paul taught that “tribulation (affliction) worketh patience”. (Romans 5:3). He also commended one assembly for their “patience” and “faith” in persecutions and tribulations (2 Thess. 1:4). The Book of Revelation (13:10) in depicting persecution to be the experience of God’s faithful people adds: “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints”. Not only here is faith closely associated with patience, but James (1:3) reminds us “that the trying of your faith worketh patience”, and that if we let “patience have her perfect(-ing) work” we shall become “perfect and entire wanting nothing”.

Patience is also associated with “hope”. It is “through patience and comfort of the scriptures” that hope results. (Rom. 15:4). Outstanding characteristics displayed by the assembly of the Thessalonians and praised by Paul in 1 Thess. 1: 3 were their “work of faith”, their “labour of love” and their “patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”. This association of “patience” with “hope” is also seen in Rom. 8:25: “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it”.

Patient endurance is also associated with “joy”. Part of Paul’s prayer for the church at Colosse (Col. 1:10,11) reads: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord...Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power unto all *patience* and longsuffering with *joyfulness*”. This is expressive of following the example of our Saviour, “who for the ‘joy’ that was set before him endured (patiently) the cross, despising the shame” (Heb.

12:2). His followers had just been urged by the writer to the Hebrews to “run with patience the race that is set before us, looking (away) unto Jesus...”

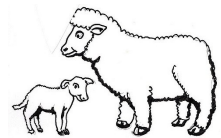
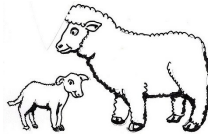
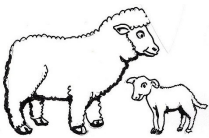
There is a beautiful prayer offered by Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians (3:5): “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ”. Here the Greek word “hupomene”, to which we have referred earlier, is translated “patient waiting” but it should read “patience” or “patient endurance”. Thus the expression becomes “the patience of Christ”. His was the perfect example of patient endurance, and it is into this, in addition to our exhibiting divine love, that Paul would have our hearts directed. Peter added his testimony to our Saviour’s steadfastness, when he wrote in 1 Pet. 2:23: “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”.

Patient endurance, then, is an absolute necessity in Christian living. It is vital in our fruit bearing spiritually; as Jesus said: “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with ‘patience’” (Luke 8:15). Similarly, it is required when divine discipline is introduced into our lives: “If ye endure (patiently) chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons” (Heb. 12:7). Peter also declares that patience, together with other spiritual characteristics, will correct spiritual short-sightedness or blindness: “But he that lacketh these things (as in verses 5-7, where ‘patience’ is included) is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (2 Pet. 1:9)

Finally, we quote from William Barclay, who elaborates on the fuller meaning of the Greek “hupomene” (patience): “It is not the patience which can sit down and bow its head, and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm is past. It is the spirit that can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope; it is not the spirit which sits statically enduring in the one place, but the spirit that bears things because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory; it is not the patience that grimly waits for the end, but the patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn.” He also quotes from an early father, Chrysostom, who calls ‘hupomene’ “a root of all the goods, mother of piety, fruit that never withers, a fortress that can never taken, a harbour

that knows no storms; the queen of virtues; the foundation of right actions; peace in war; calm in tempest; security in plots; and neither the violence of man nor the powers of the evil one can injure it. It is the quality that keeps a man on his feet with his face to the wind. It is the virtue which can transmute the hardest trial into glory, because beyond the pain it sees the goal.” Barclay also refers to George Matheson, who stricken in blindness and disappointed in love, wrote a prayer in which he pleads that he might accept God’s will ‘not with dumb resignation, but with holy joy, not only with the absence of murmur but with a song of praise’.

The Forest Gate Church Bible Monthly



“Feed My Sheep” (John 21: 17)

This is love in the making. The love of God is un-made, it is God’s nature. When we receive the Holy Spirit it unites us with God so that His love is manifested in us. When we are united with God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that is not the end; the end is that we may be one with the Father as Jesus was. What kind of oneness had Jesus with the Father? Such a oneness that the Father sent Him down here to be spent for us, and He says, “As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” (John 20: 21)

After Peter had testified how much he loved his Lord, he was instructed to spend it out—“Feed My sheep.” And Jesus had some extraordinarily funny sheep, some bedraggled, dirty sheep, some awkward butting sheep, some sheep that had gone astray! It is impossible to weary God’s love, and it is impossible to weary that love in me if it springs from the one centre. The love of God pays no attention to the distinctions made by natural individuality. If I love my Lord I have no business to be guided by natural temperament; I have to feed His sheep. There is no relief and no release from this commission.

Selected

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Extracts from the Bible Study Monthly on a New Testament book—Part 3

“Therefore, with minds alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.... But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: Be holy, because I am holy.” (1 Peter 1.13-16 NIV). Quite a graphic call, you will agree, for action on our behaviour! At the time this was written, it meant that the readers should literally gather up their long flowing garments to be ready for action. For us today, it can be taken as “an alarm call”. (Nov/Dec 2013)

The grace of God appeared over nineteen hundred years ago. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1. 17). Jesus is the Saviour of all men. In him there is hope of deliverance for all in due time. (Rom. 5. 19-21; 8. 21). Those who have received him now have the blessed hope of his coming to receive them unto himself, as “his own treasure” (John 14. 1-3). In preparation for this there must be a teaching, a training, a disciplinary process. “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3. 1-3). Peter says *“Therefore gird up your minds and fix your hopes calmly and unfalteringly upon the boon that is... to be yours, at the re-appearing of Jesus Christ.”* (1 Pet. 1. 13 Wey). We have been redeemed and called to holiness. As his peculiar people, his special treasure, we must be zealous of good works, always abounding in the work of the Lord (Tit. 2. 14; 1 Cor. 15. 58). (May June 1990)

Separation! separation! separation!!! that and that alone is the A. B. C. of the lesson even we must learn, if we would know, and walk with Him whose voice has said, *“Be ye holy...for I am holy”.* (1 Pet. 1.16) All students of the Holy Book admit the Holiness of God. But none admit the holiness of man. How then can we contemplate our text? If God is Holy beyond compare, how can we attain to holiness like Him? What do these words of Peter mean? Let us note again that they are prefaced by an “it is written”. “Because it is written”. “Be ye holy, for I am holy”. Back somewhere then in an earlier day the inspired penman had recorded these few words, and Peter takes them up to sharpen his appeal to win his brethren to a purer life. But can disciples live a holy life? Is it not presumptuous to speak of holiness and saintliness while here on earth?

Are we not of sinful stock, and tainted by the fall? Do we not oft do things we ought not, and leave undone those we should do? Can we claim, even in our best moments, to be free from sin? Nay indeed! Before the query arises the answer comes! Yet Scripture describes brethren as holy (Rom. 12. 1; Heb. 3. 1) and often calls them saints (Rom. 1. 7; 1 Cor. 1. 2; Eph. 1. 1, etc.)! In what way then can sin and holiness accord? Another distinction here needs to be made. Paul says, “There is none righteous” (Rom. 3. 10). Is holiness and righteousness the same quality of heart? Holiness is generally understood to mean freedom from sin, “an absolute purity of heart”. But so is righteousness; that is, when speaking other than of righteousness by faith. Wherein comes the difference then?

Righteousness is a forensic term—that is, it indicates a state or condition in harmonious conformity with a law. It is a “law” term, and as such applies to the equitable action, the righteous balance or the just measure, in men’s inter-dealings with each other. A transaction is accounted righteous or unrighteous according to its conformity or nonconformity to a code of laws which has been accepted and constituted the standard of rectitude in any given community. These standards vary in different communities, hence an action may be lawful (legally correct) among one people, but unlawful in another. An action may be considered right (righteous) in one community but condemned in all the rest. Herein lies much of the basic cause for the world’s present distress. (*The Beauty of Holiness*)

Writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 1. 9) he (Paul) speaks of the HOLY calling—a reminder that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12. 14), A call to be like him who issued the invitation. “*As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (**1 Pet. 1. 15-16**). Here Peter quotes from words addressed to the nation which had been called out of Egypt to be a holy nation unto himself. God’s method of forming them into a holy people was to separate them from the surrounding nations and bless them. He blessed them so abundantly... (*Jan Feb 1982*)

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”. 1 Peter 1.18-19

There is but little reference to the symbol of a Lamb in the New Testa-

ment other than in the book of Revelation. John the Baptist uses the term when pointing Jesus out to some of his disciples. "Behold the Lamb of God" said John on two successive days (John 1. 29 & 36). And Peter tells his brethren they had been redeemed from their old manner of life by the precious blood of Christ AS OF a Lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1. 18-19). A further reference is made by Paul, though without using the term itself, when he says "For even Christ our Passover is slain for us, therefore let us keep the feast..." (1 Cor. 5. 7-8 margin) Thus, though the use of this term had come into vogue, its use among the early Christians does not seem to have become very extensive. Among the many faithful sayings which passed from lip to lip in the little Christian communities, no one of them which has come down to us through New Testament sources, epitomises any teaching centring around this figure of a Lamb. Nor is there much testimony regarding the Lamb in the Prophets. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" says Isaiah (53.7) (*March April 1984*)

The Scriptures show that God had prearranged to so overrule the fore-known degradation of mankind, that it became an essential part of his Plan for the exaltation of his Son Jesus Christ (Phil. 2.7-11; Heb. 2.9,10; Heb. 5:7-10; 1 Pet. 1. 18-20). *ME*

Divine foreknowledge could foresee the fatal swing away from righteousness of man's free-will, and planned to save man from the consequences of his fatal choice, and under the same circumstances call from among man's progeny a company to be transformed and then transferred to the higher sphere. Right back there in that distant past God purposed that man should be redeemed, and at that distant time made choice of One to be man's Redeemer. That is what Peter says when he writes: "...ye were redeemed...with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world." (1 Pet. 1. 18-20 RV). This statement is an exact parallel to the words of Eph. 1. 4-7. Right back there in the unfathomable depths of time God purposed that man should be redeemed, and not only so, but that from among fallen men he would invite such as were right-hearted before him to follow His well-beloved Son through death to his heavenly throne. (*Sept Oct 1992*)

Other than Heb. 7. 28 & Heb. 10. 20 there is no other actual occurrence of the word "Consecration," but there are many instances where the actual

idea embodied in the Old Testament sense of the word occurs. Romans 12. 1, is a case in point. The sacrifice that does not terminate in a few moments of time, but which yields itself up just as fully, yet in constantly repeated acts of surrender and self-denial, over a life-time's span, is the thought connected with the Old Testament act of consecration. The same thing is set out in Peter's words (1 Pet. 1. 15-22.) He exhorts his brethren to purify their souls, (vs. 22) even more than they had done, and enjoy their freedom from their old "vain conversation" (or manner of life vs. 18) obtained for them by "the precious blood of Christ" (vs. 19), and in doing so, become more holy, even as He that had called them was Holy. (vs. 15) (Sept. 1940)

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1.23) The Holy Scriptures have truly been described as a miracle of diversity in unity. The Bible is its own great evidence to its Divine origin and authority and we cannot consider these two great facts without being tremendously impressed with its diversity and its unity.

The Word of God is not a dead letter; Hebrews speaks of the Word of God as being alive, and Peter speaks of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. We can no more leave the Bible alone or leave it out of our reckoning than we can leave Christ alone. Christ does not derive His value from the Bible; the Bible derives its value from Christ. Only through the Bible can we get to Christ; our eternal knowledge of Christ comes through the Bible. (Feb 1940)

Clarity of thought is obscured by predestination being assumed where the Scriptures show that God does, in fact, do the work of bringing about the transformation from the enmity of Adamic fleshly imperfections to the sonship of a renewed mind, and it is important to understand how God does this work, and that it is not the result of a changeless decree applicable to each individual concerned, independently of his will, made long before the transformation work commences. The Scriptures insist that God does this transforming work through his Word being received and obeyed, which results in a new mind. Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the Word—Rom. 10. 17 and 1 Pet. 1. 23. The Word is the vehicle God uses for operation of his Holy Spirit—I Thess. 2. 13 says that it is the Word which effectually works in them that believe. When

that happens, we rightly call it God's work. (*Sept Oct 1976*)

“Having fore-ordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself.” (Eph. 1. 5 RV). There are two viewpoints in the Word of God concerning the mode whereby we become sons of God. One of these is based upon the process of spirit-begetting and ultimate spirit-birth. This thought originates from the words of Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus. “Except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God...Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3. 3 & 5 RV). This is the viewpoint also of Peter and John (1 Pet. 1. 23; 1 John 5. 1,4,18). Paul presents another view. He speaks not of begetting, but of adoption... (*Nov/Dec 1992*)

Peter's last legacy to the Church is nearly completed. He has but one more message to give, and this of greater moment to we who live now than it was to the believers of his own day. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1. 19). “More sure”; again there is the ring of certainty, of conviction. The word of prophecy, of teaching, is the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1. 23). We, in this our day, do not have the memory as did those early believers, of seeing and hearing Jesus in the flesh. We cannot even claim to have talked with and learned from those who themselves had seen and heard Jesus in the flesh. We are twenty centuries away from those times. But we do have something which those early believers never did have, the complete Scripture of those times. We have, not only the Old Testament which they did possess and know, but the New Testament which they never knew. And this, under the illumination and enlightenment given us by the Holy Spirit, is in very truth a light shining in a dark place, a lamp which illumines and marks out the way in which we shall go, and a source of instruction and inspiration to our minds. This, says Peter, is a sure and certain guide until the consummation of all things when our union with our Lord in the celestial realm is realised. (*Nov Dec 1984*)

“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1 .25)

It is in periods of silent meditation that the voice of God is heard, that men

come to their senses and learn what they have to do. “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isa. 65. 17). These are God’s words, words of assurance and hope, words of life. Man’s endeavours at peace and quality fail for obvious reasons, the spiritual and social elements dissolve in the fiery heat of troubled times, but “the word of the Lord endureth forever” (1 Pet. 1. 25). “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24. 35). (*July Aug 1977*)



The Soul and Animals

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2. 7). The Hebrew *nephesh* has the primary significance of “breath” and points back to the account of man’s first appearance on earth as a creature dependent on breathing in order to continue life. The use of *nephesh*, translated “soul”, as a word descriptive of a living creature, is constant throughout the Old Testament. Animals are described as souls in Num. 31. 28. Souls are said to eat (Lev. 17. 10) to eat blood (Lev. 17. 12) to eat dead bodies (Lev. 17. 15) and to have a longing to eat flesh (Deut. 12. 20). They can be thirsty (Prov. 25. 25) and have a longing for strong drink (Deut. 14. 26). They may on the other hand have abhorrence for meat (Job 33. 20). It is conceivable for souls to swear or to touch unclean things (Lev. 5. 2. & 4) and although all these operations denote life and that the soul is a living entity, it is also possible for the soul to be smitten by enemies (Josh. 11. 11) and to die (Ezek. 18. 4 & 20). References such as these can be found scattered all through the Old Testament. The word occurs seven hundred times and is translated “soul” 471 times, “life” or “living” 150 times, and also by such words as man, person, self, they, me, him, any one, breath, heart, mind, appetite, this body, lust, creature, and beast. Twenty-eight times is the word applied to the lower animals. The New Testament word corresponding to the Hebrew *nephesh* is *psuche* and this is translated “soul” 59 times, “life” 40 times, as well as mind, us, you, heart, and heartily, occurring one hundred and fifty times altogether of which two references are to the lower animals.



TIMES AND SEASONS

7. The Period of the Judges (Part c)

With the birth of Samuel the story passes from the Book of Judges to the First Book of Samuel. The time, a little over a century before the accession of King David, and a few years prior to Jephthah's deliverance of Israel from the Ammonites. Samson was just getting into his stride in his incursions against the Philistines but his exploits and influence only affected the south-west of the country and it is unlikely that Eli at Shiloh knew much about what was going on down there. From the First book of Samuel it would seem that there was no trouble from the Philistines until Samuel was at least in his twenties and this would be probably ten years or so after the death of Samson, so this all fits in.

The life of Samuel had three phases. First came his boyhood and attendance upon Eli to the latter's death, about twenty-five years. Next was the period he ruled Israel as its last Judge and turned them from idolatry to allegiance to God, about thirty-five years. Finally came his progressive relinquishing of power to Saul during the latter's reign of forty years. With the death of Samuel the period of the Judges comes to an end, and that of the Kings, in the person of David, commences.

Samuel could well have been brought to Eli by his mother as a six-year-old boy; unlikely any earlier. He was perhaps twelve when the Lord spoke to him in the sanctuary. At the time alluded to in 1 Sam. 3. 19-21 when all Israel realised that he was established to be a prophet, and the Lord "*appeared again in Shiloh*" he was probably about twenty years of age. At this time, about 1090 BC, there could have been no interference in the affairs of Israel by other nations. Egypt had sunk into a period of decline under a succession of effeminate Pharaohs, the Ramessides; not until the time of Solomon did they count for anything in international affairs. The Hittites had been extinguished as a military power half a century earlier in the time of Gideon and Israel's northern borders were secure. Assyria, the other great oppressor, was fully occupied resisting the rising power of Babylon and in no mood for adventures in Israel. All this accounts for the fact that the narrative of Samuel's early life contains no hint of foreign invasion or oppression. The first intimation of that is in 1 Sam. 4. 1, when the Philistines launched an invasion which resulted in the Israelites taking the Ark of the Covenant with them into battle and losing it to the enemy.

Samuel might have been about twenty-five at that time, and Eli dying, as stated in the narrative, at ninety-eight.

Israel was now back under the dominion of the Philistines. Such deliverance as Samson had given them had not lasted many years. The Ark had been restored by the Philistines because of its disastrous effects upon them (1 Sam. 5 & 6), but it did not go back to Shiloh. It remained in a house at Kirjath-Jearim for the next twenty years (1 Sam. 7. 2) until under Samuel's leadership the nation came to a state of repentance before the Lord and Samuel called a great conference at Mizpeh to supplicate the Lord for deliverance. The Philistines, scenting sedition, came up against them, and this time the faith of Israel did not fail. This time they eschewed their weapons of war and trusted in the Lord that He would deliver. True to his word, He came out against the Philistines and with the forces of Nature so utterly defeated the invaders that they "*came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel*" (1 Sam. 7. 10-14). What Samson forty or so years earlier had failed to do by his armed might, Samuel had achieved by the power of faith. For a short space, perhaps fifteen or twenty years, all Israel was at peace with no threat from enemies, and Samuel travelled from place to place in circuit, to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, in turn, to judge and administer the affairs of Israel. He was the undisputed Head of State, and all Israel acknowledged his leadership and followed him in serving the Lord.

But Samuel was now growing old—he would have been about seventy by now—and although he had associated his two sons, Joel and Abiah, with him in the ruler-ship, they did not follow in his ways. Like the renegade sons of Eli his predecessor, they "*turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment*" (1 Sam. 8. 3). It is a sad thing to say, but the man who had converted and kept faithful to God a whole nation of several millions completely failed to do the same with his own sons. It happens so often, and the explanation seems so elusive, locked in the inscrutable mysteries of God. But the senior men of Israel were under no illusion. They knew that when their revered leader went the way of all flesh they would be leaderless as they had been before and they began to make plans for their national safety which looked back again to the arm of flesh. "*Behold*" they said to him, "*thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations*" (1 Sam. 8. 5).

Samuel was despondent. He sensed the changing mood of the nation. A relatively long period of peace and prosperity was bringing back the old arrogance and they began to forget that their freedom from enemy interference had been due to the intervention of God on their behalf. They began to long for military adventure, to go out and harry other nations as they themselves had been harried. “*Nay*”, they said “*but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the (other) nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles*” (1 Sam. 8. 19-20). So Samuel went to the Lord with his problem.

The answer was probably unexpected. He was told to accede (consent) to the peoples’ wish and give them a king. He did not know that in the wisdom and purposes of God the time of the Judges was now to come to an end and be succeeded by a monarchy. Israel was to learn that without loyalty to God the institution of a king would only bring disaster, as in fact it did four hundred years later when the monarchy in its turn came to an end. So Samuel, faithful to his God as ever, did as he was instructed and found a man for the purpose. Saul the son of Kish, a man of Benjamin, became Israel’s first king.

Saul proved a failure. His early promise changed to arrogance and self-will, a refusal to heed the word of the Lord or to accept Samuel’s still considerable authority in affairs of state. In fact, throughout his forty years’ reign, he was really little more than the leader of the army, spending most of his time fighting enemies who seemed increasingly to come against him the more he departed from the Lord. Amalekites, Ammonites, Philistines, they all rose up against him almost as if they sensed that the Lord’s protecting hand was steadily being withdrawn. Sometimes he won the day and sometimes he lost. There is not much doubt that the civil administration of the nation was still largely in the hands of Samuel. And after about twenty-five years of increasingly unsatisfactory kingship Samuel received the Divine commission to seek out and anoint as future king a man whom God had chosen—David the shepherd boy.

With that act Samuel, the last of the Judges, began to sink into obscurity. With his death some ten years later at the advanced age of something like a hundred and five, and Saul’s death in battle a couple of years or so afterwards, the period of the Judges came to an end. The acceptance of

David as king over Judah at Hebron immediately upon Saul's death commenced the Period of the Kings, the monarchy. From the Entry of Israel into the Promised Land under Joshua to the enthronement of David at Hebron was a period of three hundred and eighty-five years. For something in the region of three-quarters of that time Israel was given over to idolatry, the worship of other gods, and to every possible violation of the Covenant. But there must have been a remnant, a loyal God-fearing residue which kept the faith alive through those dark years. When the light did break through during the forty years reign of the good king David, the Scriptures were still intact, the Books of the Law recording the ways of God from the time of creation up to David's own time, preserved by faithful souls through the years of unbelief for the benefit of generations yet unborn. At no time does God leave himself without a witness, and when the story did come to be read, it revealed faithfully and dispassionately the failures and the shortcomings of the people of God just as it dwelt upon their successes and their virtues.

The time of the Judges was a dark and tragic phase of Israel's history, but it was a necessary one in their development, and with all their later faults and backslidings they never fell quite so low again as they did do in the days intervening between Joshua and Samuel.

To be continued
AOH

Samuel, Greatest of the Judges, in 4 chapters also by A.O. Hudson, available free and on request in print or as a pdf.



The fox is known for its slyness and cunning.



They live in holes or dens as it says in Matthew 8. 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (See also Luke 9. 58 NIV)

Ezekiel 13. 4 "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts." Here the fox is mentioned in connection with false prophets.

Nehemiah 4. 3 "Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

NOTICES

BIBLE STUDENTS SEMINAR DAY
SATURDAY 16 JUNE 2018
KENSWORTH VILLAGE HALL
The Chilterns, off Common Road, Kensworth, Near Dunstable
LU6 3RJ

11.30 a.m.—5 p.m.

All Welcome

For a programme, please email nick.charcharos@btinternet.com

Or by post 12 Stanley Gardens, Tring, HP23 4BS

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Theme; Revelation 2 & 3

Please book by 30 June with the Accommodation Secretary

or for a programme & booking form —please contact Nicholas Charcharos

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2ND UK BIBLE STUDENTS CONVENTION

FRIDAY 26-SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER 2018

Convention text ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’ (1 Pet. 1. 16 RSV)

For information, please email Dina Hinde (dina6ro@yahoo.com), Dorota Pilch (dorota.broda@gmail.com), Nicholas Charcharos (nick.charcharos@btinternet.com),

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THE FATHER’S WILL

“The fox,” said Jesus, “hath his hole
 And birds their nests do have,
 But the Son of Man He doth not own
 A place to lay His head.”



Poems of the Way



VOICES



There are little sights and sounds with which we are all familiar, that have a healing effect upon the mind that is overstrung with work and worry. The ripple of the silvery stream beneath the shady trees; the hum of the bees and the chirping of the grasshopper in the clover; the golden corn waving in the soft breezes; the flitting butterfly amid the fragrant flowers; the glittering insects in the grass basking in the warmth of the sun; the rustle of the rabbits in the undergrowth; the cheerful singing of the birds: the fleecy clouds floating in the blue skies; the melodious skylark soaring exultingly above all. Such influences are too subtle for human explanation. Little voices they are, proclaiming the grand harmony, the peace universal in nature, and they act as a restorative mentally and physically.

But there are other little sights and sounds of a spiritual kind that tend to heal the heart that is overwrought with failure and sorrow. These are little voices proclaiming a loving God who is watching and caring: a great High Priest who is sympathetic, understanding and ready to help. What sights and sounds are these? The kindly word gently spoken in a tone of cheer; the sudden sparkle of a gracious smile; the unexpected gleam of a sympathetic tear; the little extra pressure of the hand; the secret act of self-sacrifice, unseen, unheard; the silent look that can find no words yet shows it has heard and understood. These are powerful little voices. They require no scholarship, no, talent, no skill beyond the scholarship, talent and skill that the spirit of God bequeaths to every loving and earnest heart.

“Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.” (Matt. 24: 46; Luke 12: 43)

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

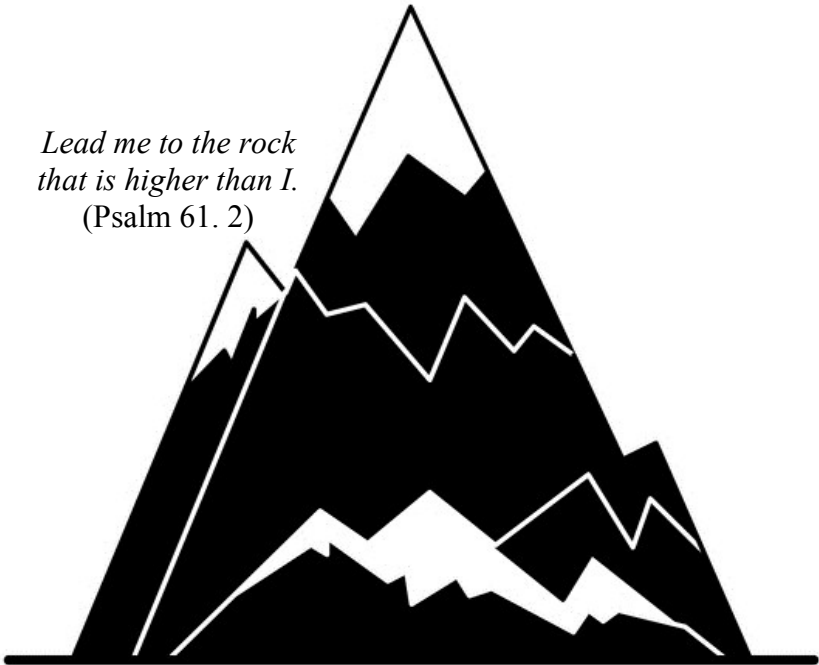
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*Lead me to the rock
that is higher than I.
(Psalm 61. 2)*



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4. 15 NRSV).

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.

Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

In these uncertain times we look towards things which are solid and reliable. Those in the U.K. have relied on the National Health Service (NHS) to provide universal healthcare for 70 years since 5 July 1948 when it started while Nye Bevan, MP for Ebbw Vale in South Wales, was the Minister of Health

Rocks can take many forms. They can be literal or symbolic rocks. Literal rocks can be rough or hewn.

In the Old Testament God was often spoken of as a rock for individuals and Israel. Moses spoke of God as a rock whose work was perfect and all His ways were just. Hannah spoke of God as a rock when she handed over her longed-for son to God to work in His service.

David spoke of God as a mountain crag and a stronghold. In prayer David prayed to God as a rock because he knew he could rely on God especially in his troubles and cares. Perhaps that's why there are so many hymns that talk about rock.

In Zechariah's day there was the building of the second Temple in Jerusalem. It had its headstone or foundation stone. There was a literal one in that day but it also reminds us of verses in the New Testament which

speak of Jesus as a foundation or corner-stone of which Zerubbabel was a type. It is a quotation from Psalm 118. 22-23 which says, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

Peter picks up on this after describing the early church in this way as lively stones being built into a spiritual house offering spiritual sacrifices. (1 Pet. 2. 5) This is the Lord's doing this day and cause for rejoicing.

Rocks are commonly used in the U.K. to produce headstones in graveyards. They stand in memory of a loved one and a record of the hope of the resurrection for that individual.

The Bible supplies few details about the actual (burial) ceremony. In one case only is there a fairly detailed description: "They buried him in the own tomb which he had hewn out for himself in the city of David... They made a very great fire in his honour." (2 Chron. 16. 14 RSV).

A marked change in burial customs among Jewish families in Jerusalem and Judea occurred sometime during the late Hasmonean period, around the year 40 B.C., when the bench burial caves were replaced with loculi—long, narrow depressions in the walls. A family sepulchre usually consisted of several chambers.

When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. Matthew 27. 57-60

Archaeological evidence on the whole bears out the biblical testimony. The most common type of interment was a communal, apparently family, burial in a cave hewn out of rock. This often consisted of more than one chamber, each chamber encompassed with elevated rock benches upon which the deceased were temporarily placed. When this space was needed for fresh burials, the bones were collected and placed in a heap on the floor of the chamber or in a special pit or small chamber set aside for this purpose.

The Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible, Wigoder

Magazine content. What is published is believed to have a wide interest, but everything printed may not necessarily be the opinion of the editor and his colleagues.

ROCK OF AGES

“He helped His saints in ancient days.”

We have often sung the hymn “Rock of Ages cleft for me.” It is an example of Trinitarian hymnology. The title “Rock of Ages” definitely belongs to God Himself as being a tower of strength, immovable, secure, whereas the hymn gives the title to Jesus, who suffered that we might live.

In the Hebrew Scriptures God was often referred to as the Rock. Some of the references are found in Deut. 32. 4,15,18; 1 Sam. 2. 2; 2 Sam. 22. 2,3,32; Psalms. 18. 31,46; Isa. 17. 10 and Hab. 1. 12 (Margin). A consideration of the circumstances around some of these references should be interesting and helpful.

SONG OF MOSES Deut. 32. 1 to 43

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” v. 4. Moses likens his God to a rock, suggesting solidity, firmness, sharpness, strength, and security. The work of God is perfect, He is too wise to err, too good to be unkind. Moses, in this song, gives a wonderful survey of God’s care and preparation for His people Israel, even from the time “when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” (v. 8) This watch-care was not appreciated for “Jeshurun (another name for Israel) waxed fat, and kicked.” (v. 15) In spite of their many blessings they forgot God and lightly esteemed the “Rock of their salvation.” Further, they provoked God by serving strange gods, or rather no-gods, (vv. 15 to 18). God would punish them, and indeed, were it not for the even worse nations round about He would scatter them for ever (vv. 19 to 26). The children of Israel “were void of counsel...O that they were wise...that they would consider their latter end” the retribution coming in due course. “How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight...?” Was it not because the Rock of Israel had sold the enemy into their hands? Had not God put fear into the hearts of the enemies of Israel? “For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.” This, then, was a truism. The nations around conceded that Jehovah was a greater God than theirs. He was feared by all (vv. 27 to 31).

SONG OF HANNAH

We are all familiar with the story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She was one of the two wives of Elkanah. The name Hannah means gracious, merciful, prayer, and she was true to her name. An instance of her silent prayer is given in 1 Sam. 1. 11-13. She was childless and felt the reproach. The other wife of Elkanah had provoked Hannah sorely, but there was no thought of retaliation in the mind of Hannah. She just made a vow to the Lord that if He would grant her request and give her a son she would present him to the Lord to be used in His service. A purer motive for a prayer cannot be imagined. After thus unburdening her heart to the Lord at Shiloh, she “went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.” A prayer of faith indeed. She had no doubt of the answer to her prayer, she expected her request to be granted—and it was. “The LORD remembered her...she bare a son and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.”

The child was weaned, and at the age of twelve Hannah took him to Shiloh with more than the appropriate offering, and presented him to the Lord there, saying, “As long as he liveth he whom I have obtained by petition shall be returned” (1 Sam. 1. 28 Margin) . How easy it is to pray for something ardently desired. How easy to forget the granted petition. But not so with the mother of Samuel. Mother’s pride and joy given up without needing a reminder. The story is told so briefly that the point of it can easily be missed. Hannah was not content with just handing over the lad; no, she expressed her gratitude in the Psalm recorded in 1 Sam. 2. 1 to 10. In v. 2 she says, “There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.” The thought of a rock suggests something firm, sure, abiding, everlasting. The faith of Hannah rested in a real God: a God who could not fail. Her prayer was answered, she was satisfied. To be given the child and to present him back to God to be used in His service was blessing enough. Her reproach had been removed: but that was not the end of the story. God is debtor to no one. “The LORD visited Hannah, so that she...bare three sons and two daughters.” (v. 21) She received back far more than she gave. The same is true with us; we receive back “manifold more in the present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” (Luke 18. 28-30).

SONG OF DAVID

This song is first found in 2 Sam. 22, and repeated in Psalm 18, where it is edited by Hezekiah and contains some variations. The song was written after David became king, and was inspired by his troubles, chief of which were the persecutions of Saul. David had been an outlaw and had fled from Saul to the hills and rocky places on three occasions.

David had a wonderful mind. Perhaps not what we should term a spiritual mind, but at least one which could spiritualise his experiences; experiences which inspired pictures of God. “The LORD is my Rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.” Rotherham’s translation is more forceful. “Yahweh, was my mountain crag and my stronghold, and my deliverer—mine; My God, was my rock, I sought refuge in him,—My shield, and my horn of salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, My saviour! from violence, thou didst save me.” (2 Sam. 22. 2 & 3) *God*, says David, *is my Rock*, my mountain crag. That is, the steep rocky mountain-side or summit, suggesting the strength and majesty of God inherent strength, power to withstand. My stronghold, giving the advantages of defence, view from above, hiding places, caves, ambushments, all unknown to a stranger. *My deliverer*; David had evidence of this when he was being hunted by Saul. First, at the time when he was almost surrounded in the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam. 23. 19-28), when things looked black indeed for David. Just at the critical moment word came to Saul that the Philistines had invaded the land. Saul gave up the chase for the time being. There was, however, only a short respite, for after dealing with the invaders, King Saul proceeded to the wilderness of Engedi (1 Sam. 24), with 3,000 picked men to seek David and his men among the rocks of the wild goats. It happened that Saul entered a cave to sleep, the very cave in which David was hiding. While Saul was sleeping it was suggested to David that he slay the king. David rebuffed the suggestion, saying that he would not touch the Lord’s anointed. Instead, he cut off a piece of the king’s robe to show that Saul’s life had been in his hand. When this was made known to Saul he wept and said to David, “Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil” (v. 17). David’s magnanimity had sobered Saul. That was the second deliverance. Evidently Saul’s repentance was merely emotion, for it was not long before David was again being hunted and experienced his third deliverance. This time the scene is laid in the wilderness of Zith (1 Sam.

26). Saul is found sleeping with all his 3,000 men around him. This time David sent one of his men to take away Saul's spear and cruse of water, for a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them. (v. 12) David wakens the king and tells him that his life has been in danger, but that he, David, had spared him. Again Saul's heart is touched. "Behold," he says "I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly," (v. 21) and gives up seeking the life of David, "and Saul returned to his place." (v. 25) Then David had a reaction. Here, at the height of his faith, and following his third deliverance, he becomes depressed and says, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." He then went away and lived with the Philistines, the enemies of God and of Israel, for sixteen months. By force of circumstances, at the end of this time David and his men found themselves marching with the Philistines to make war with Israel. God delivered David from this anomalous position through the overwhelming distrust or the lords of the Philistines, who compelled his return to his dwelling place. Perhaps we can take a warning from this, lest our disagreement with some of the Lord's people should make us feel at home with the worldly minded and those at enmity with God.

David had so many experiences to prove the Lord's care over him that he sings "My deliverer, mine." My God, who watches over me. The same thought of loving supervision is shown in Psalm 23, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

"My God was my Rock, I sought refuge in him." A similar expression occurs in Psalm 91. 2, "I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." God, a fortress, a refuge, always at hand to answer every call. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

"My shield." David pictured God as standing between him and his enemies, so that he was guarded from the arrows of malice and spite from his foes, so that they could not harm: guarded also from blows that were close up, from those who would endeavour to press home their attack. This shield, however, is according to faith. If we have no faith in God as a shield, then He can be no shield to us.

"My horn of salvation." The source of power and strength, strength that is

made perfect in weakness.

“My high tower.” High place, position of advantage, all seeing, foreseeing: there are no second causes to the people of God. “As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?” “The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation. (2 Sam. 22. 31,32,47.)

This God, Jehovah, the Rock, stronghold, fortress, refuge shield, and deliverer was David’s God, Zion’s God, is our God, our Father, “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” and we are seldom out of trouble here. We are promised help in trouble, but not freedom from it. God was the Rock of natural Israel. He is the Rock of spiritual Israel. His work is perfect. We may fail: God never fails. He is omnipotent. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.” “Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,” This is possible through a simple faith in the Rock of our Salvation.

“Trust ye in Yahweh, unto futurity,—For, in...Yahweh, is a rock of ages.” (Isa. 26. 4 Rotherham)

WFS



When Jacob’s sons went down to Egypt a second time, Jacob told them to take a present for the Egyptian governor who, unknown to them, was their brother Joseph.

Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man a present, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds”. (Gen. 43. 11 RSV)

The tree from which pistachio nuts grow is found in the rocky areas of Israel and Syria.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION



4. The Lampstand and the Olive Trees



The Lampstand and the Olive Trees! Picturesque symbolism this, relating somewhat of Israel's ancient ceremonial to its reality in the Kingdom of God. It is evident that this fourth chapter of Zechariah is looking forward into the future much more than it looks back into the past, for it displays as its main feature the active operation of the Holy Spirit in a world where the supremacy of God is unchallenged, and this happy state is not yet.

Zechariah saw a golden lampstand, reminiscent of that which stood in the "Holy" of the Tabernacle and later in Solomon's Temple. It had the seven lamps, apparently carried on seven arms diverging from a central column, but there the similarity ended. Each lamp on Bezaleel's construction had its own reservoir for oil which had to be filled daily by the attendant priests. The lampstand seen by Zechariah possessed a central "bowl", a common oil container, from which seven pipes radiated to the lamps so that they drew a continuous supply of oil from the bowl and needed no replenishing. On each side of the lampstand stood an olive tree, with branches overshadowing, and from each tree a "funnel" or connecting pipe leading to the bowl. From the olives on the trees a continuous supply of olive oil flowed through the two funnels into the bowl and from thence to the seven lamps so that their light was continuous; they never went out.

In answer to the prophet's question the revealing angel told him that the vision was a symbolic representation of the manner in which the Holy Spirit of God would execute the Divine purpose. *"This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel"* he said (ch. 4. 6-10) *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit...thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel... shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone"*. At first sight there may seem to be no rational connection between a lampstand with two olive trees and a mountain becoming a plain with an emerging headstone. There is, however, one readily discernible link—the work of God denoted by the angel's words is executed by the power of the Holy Spirit; the principal element in the symbol is the olive oil, flowing from the two trees into the lamps and giving light. The Holy Spirit is frequently symbolised by olive oil, as witness its use in the anointing of the Levitical priesthood in symbol of dedication to Divine service, and Peter's application of the same to Jesus; *"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with*

the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10. 38). This allusion is almost certainly derived from Psa. 45. 7 in which the victorious Messiah in the days of his glory is addressed; “*God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*”. That the followers of Christ, dedicated to his service, participate in this anointing is clear from 1 John 2. 27 and the phrasing of this verse makes crystal clear that it is the possession of the Holy Spirit that constitutes the anointing, and thus the fact that this is the meaning of the oil in Zechariah’s vision is confirmed.

Now the two olive trees are called by the angel “*the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth*” (ch. 4. 14). “Sons of the oil” is the literal Hebrew expression. These trees are the twin sources of the oil which flows to the lamps and gives universal enlightenment. There is only one time in history when two channels of the Holy Spirit are discharging their duty simultaneously side by side, and there is sevenfold illumination in consequence, and that is in the Millennial Age, when the Lord’s twin instruments, the Christian Church in Heaven and the restored and converted Holy Nation on earth, are engaged in their work of sending the light and life of the Divine call worldwide. “*Nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising*” said Isaiah of the earthly Holy Nation (Isa. 60. 3 RV). “*The light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days*” he says again in Isa. 30. 26 and this might well be the basis for our Lord’s words describing the position of his followers of this present Age, the Church, when He said of that coming day “*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*” (Matthew 13. 43).

The lampstand, then, represents the Millennial Kingdom on earth, shedding its light—which implies life—upon all mankind, dispelling the darkness of sin and leading men into the light of eternity. The oil, flowing from the trees into the lamps and therein converted to light, indicates the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh through the medium of the earthly and heavenly aspects of the “Servant”, the two anointed companies who have been found fitted for the task of world conversion. In Nature, of course, the tree does not create the oil; it is able to produce oil only because it receives energy and power from sunlight with which so to do. So in the reality. The Lord’s servants are not originators of the Holy Spirit of power; they are mediums for its transmission and the power comes to them from the centre and source of all life and power—the Eternal.

Fully to appreciate the relation between the lampstand vision and the “headstone” application it is necessary to examine the structure of the chapter. It is very possible that some dislocation of the text has occurred at a very early date; verses 11-14 have to do with verses 1-5, and the message respecting the headstone, which appears in the centre of the chapter, would seemingly be more appropriate at the end. If in fact there has been such dislocation it must have occurred quite soon after the writing of the book, for the Septuagint, which was translated from the Hebrew Scriptures about 250 B.C., has the same arrangement as our A.V. Zechariah probably did not complete his writings until late in his life which would hardly be more than two centuries before the Septuagint. In between these two dates came the time at which the Old Testament canon was closed, reputedly by Ezra, and it might well have been then that the slight confusion in the text occurred. There is no difference to the interpretation of the chapter in either case, but the re-arrangement does cause the passage to run more smoothly and understandably, and helps to clear up the very obscure A.V. rendering of v. 10. An endeavour is made here to offer what is thought to be probably the correct reconstruction.

After beholding the lampstand with its seven lamps (vv. 1-4) and asking the revealing angel “*What are these, my lord?*” the narrative proceeds (v. 5) *Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, no my lord.* (6a) *Then he answered and spake unto me, saying* (10b) *Those seven: they (these seven) are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth* (11) *Then answered I, and said unto him. What are these two olive trees...* (12) *And I answered again and said unto him, What be these two olive branches...* (13-14) *And he answered me and said...These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.* (6b) *This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts* (7) *thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel shall become a plain, and he shall bring forth the headstone shouting, Grace, grace unto it*”. Then the chapter concludes with a personal word from the Lord to Zechariah (8) “*Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me saying,* (9) *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto you.* (10a) *For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel*”. This is then the end of the chapter.

Thus arranged, the chapter first describes the vision of the lampstand and olive trees, and the angel's explanation (vv. 1-6a, 10b-14) picturing the Lord's two anointed ones, Israel and the Church, commencing their work in the Millennial Age as channels of the Holy Spirit to the world of men; next it presents the angel's declaration respecting the demolished mountain and the setting of the headstone (vv. 6b-7) picturing the passing away of the kingdoms of this world at the instance of the victorious Christ in kingly power in the same Age; finally it records the word of the Lord to Zechariah himself (vv. 8-10a) assuring him that the completion of the Temple in his own day under the administration of Zerubbabel was to be a sign to his fellows of the Divine authority behind his prophecy. On this assumption the chapter is consistent and logical.

On this basis, after saying in verse 14 that the two olive trees are the two anointed ones which stand by the Lord of the whole earth, the angel concludes his explanation of the lampstand by saying (in v. 10b) and referring obviously to the seven lamps, "*those seven: they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through all the earth*". Chapter 3 speaks of the stone, laid before Joshua the High Priest, which had seven facets or eyes, a seven-sided stone, so to speak, picturing the universal surveillance of the "stone" Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, in the earth during the Millennial Age. Now here in chapter 4 the same idea is expressed but this time the universal power and surveillance of the Holy Spirit "in that day" is pictured by the sevenfold light from the lampstand, also going forth into all the earth, the "seven eyes of the Lord".

With this picture in mind it is easier to comprehend the second section, the angel's message regarding the mountain and the headstone. The great mountain which is to become a plain is of course the mountain of the kingdoms of this world. "*It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, ...and all nations shall flow unto it*" (Isa. 2. 2). "*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain*" (Isa. 40. 4). The picture here is that the holy city, the New Jerusalem, comes down to earth out of Heaven (Rev. 21) and as a city crowning the summit of a great mountain ("*the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal*" Rev. 21. 16) rules supreme over all the earth. Zerubbabel here is an alias for the Messianic King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Zerubbabel himself

neither moved a mountain or saw any earthly kingdom fall prostrate before him. He died as he lived, a governor of Judea, subordinate always to the Persian King. But Zerubbabel as the representative of royal power in Judea at that time fitly pictures the King who shall reign in the day which sees the reality of the vision. And this is where the “headstone” comes into the picture.

The “headstone” or “corner stone” was the principal foundation stone of a building and served in ceremonial fashion much as do the “foundation stones” of modern buildings, laid in a formal ceremony by some notability and as often as not blessed by some ecclesiastical dignitary. (At least this was the rule a generation or so ago; the concrete and glass monstrosities of the present are usually put up with too much haste to allow for such leisurely preliminaries). The basic idea was the same; the foundation stone in theory determined the position and size and purpose of the building and was in a sense representative of the building. This principle is used in the Scriptures to delineate the Lord Christ as the foundation and sustainer of the edifice which God is building in this Age; first the Christian Church, of whom He is said in Eph. 2. 20 and 1 Pet. 2. 6 to be the “chief corner stone”, and later the Holy City of the next Age of which he is both chief corner stone and its everlasting light. *“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner”* sang the Psalmist in Psa. 118. 22. *“Behold”* said the Lord through the prophet Isaiah *“I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be confounded”* (Isa. 28. 16; 1 Pet. 2. 6). Here in Zechariah this same corner stone is brought forth amid general rejoicings to initiate the building of that new Divinely ordained structure which is to succeed the levelling of the “great mountain” of this world. In this context the picture is that of the building of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, upon the ruins of the destroyed “*kosmos*” of this Age, and the exaltation of Christ as supreme. When earth’s new king once asserts his power and authority in the earth He will not desist until his work is finished by the entire human race being brought to a full knowledge and understanding of the Christian Gospel, and every individual has made his deliberate and final choice for good—or evil. *“He shall not fail nor be discouraged”* says Isaiah of our Lord at this same time *“till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles (coastlands)”*—the extremities of the earth—*“shall wait for his law”*. (Isa. 42. 4).

This ends the second section of the chapter. The demolished mountain and the headstone which replaces it, an exhibition of Divine power by the Holy Spirit in contrast to human might and power, of vv. 6-7, have nothing to do with rebuilt Temple in a “*day of small things*” of vv. 8-10. In any case the one is a revelation to Zechariah by the angel and the other a direct word to him from the Lord. The two sections relate to distinct and dissimilar matters.

It is possible that verses 8-10 are not intended to have other than a local and immediate prophetic application. The word of the Lord was to Zechariah directly; it told him that Zerubbabel, who had already started building the Temple, would also finish it, and by this sign, said Zechariah to his hearers or readers, they would know that he was a true prophet, that the Lord of Hosts had in truth sent him to them. Those who had despised the “*day of small things*”, the meagre results, so far, of the Jewish restoration in Jerusalem and Judea, would yet rejoice when they saw the plummet—instrument used in building construction—in the hand of Zerubbabel. The R.S.V. puts it very succinctly “*For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerub’babe*”.

The prediction was certainly literally fulfilled. Zechariah had this word from the Lord in the second year of Darius of Persia (Zech. 1. 1) which was 519 B.C. The Temple was started under the administration of Zerubbabel in 536 B.C., stopped by order of Cambyses of Persia in 529 B.C., resumed by permission of Darius in 520 B.C., and finally completed by Zerubbabel in 516 B.C., three years after Zechariah uttered these words. Throughout that frustrating period of twenty years, with the very existence of the new Jewish colony menaced by powerful enemies, it must often have seemed that the people lived in a “*day of small things*”; their present situation bore very unfavourable comparison with the glories of the old days before the captivity, when Solomon’s Temple was still standing and the city of Jerusalem the wonder of nations. So those who crowded to hear Zechariah’s colourful predictions on the occasion of their first utterance, seeing, figuratively speaking, “*the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel*”, realised three years later that the words of the prophet had come true and stamped those words with the seal of Divine authority.

It is possible to draw a parallel with the future. Whether that parallel is

intended in this passage may be questioned, but it is true that in the day of Christ's power soon to come, when in the glory of his Kingdom the Holy City shines resplendent and complete, those amongst men who in this day and this life have despised and ignored the apparent weakness and futility of the Divine programme, or have not believed in any God-given destiny for mankind, will "rejoice" at the then evident power and activity of earth's new rulership. At any rate an earlier prophet, Isaiah, was in no doubt about the fact when he declaimed (Isa. 25. 9) "*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*". And if, in the wonder and rapture of that moment, they conveniently forget that in the past they were largely unbelievers and agnostics and were only unknowingly "waiting for him" there will be no recriminations on that score from our God. Like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son, all He wants is to have his erring sons repent, and reform, and come home. That is why the Holy City comes down to earth.

(To be continued)

AOH



Be Thou, O Rock of Ages, nigh!
So shall each murmuring thought be gone;
And grief and fear and care shall fly,
As clouds before the mid-day sun.

Charles Wesley

Take courage, and turn your troubles, which are without remedy, into material for spiritual progress. Often turn to our Lord, who is watching you, poor frail little being as you are, amid your labours and distractions. He sends you help, and blesses your affliction. This thought should enable you to bear your troubles patiently and gently, for love of Him who only allows you to be tried for your own good. Raise your heart continually to God, seek His aid, and let the foundation stone of your consolation be your happiness in being His. All vexations and annoyances will be comparatively unimportant while you know that you have such a Friend, such a Stay, such a Refuge. May God be ever in your heart.

Francis de Sales

O SOMETIMES the shadows are deep,

And rough seems the path to the goal,
 And sorrows how often they sweep,
 Like tempests, down over the soul!

Chorus—

O then to the Rock let me fly,
 To the Rock that is higher than I
 O then to the Rock let me fly,
 To the Rock that is higher than I.

O! sometimes so long seems the day,
 And sometimes so heavy my feet;
 But, toiling in life's dusty way,
 The Rock's blessed shadow, how sweet!

O! near to the Rock let me keep,
 Or blessings or sorrows prevail,
 Or climbing the mountain-way steep,
 Or walking the shadowy vale.



These are the words of Erastus Johnson, an American who lived a varied life and had experience as a teacher, student of the Bible, sailor, farmer as well as being involved in the oil business in Pittsburgh. It appears he only wrote one book of poetry which was not widely distributed at the time.

The chorus of this hymn seems clearly to take at its source Psalm 61. 2. But what does it mean? The Bible commentator Barnes suggests that the hymn was written by King David when he was in exile because of the rebellion of Absalom his son. A vale would be a place where he would be exposed to his enemies and the opposite would be a high place a refuge a place of safety and security from a higher, greater source than he—his heavenly Father.

Psalm 61. 1-4 Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

Psalm 18. 31-32 (RSV) For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a

rock, except our God?—the God who girded me with strength, and made my way safe.

Psalm 18. 46 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

Isaiah 9. 2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Isaiah 32. 1-2 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Proverbs 18. 10 (RSV) The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

Psalm 107. 10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.

Luke 3. 5 ...and the rough ways shall be made smooth.

Job 27. 20 Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night.

Psalm 71. 3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.

2 Samuel 22. 2-3,32 He said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; the God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence...For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?

Psalm 148. 14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Part 10



Hindrances to Prayer

When we awake to the fact that prayer according to the will of God, and in the name of Jesus, is a mighty force placed at the disposal of the people of God, it is natural that we should desire to put it into operation. There is nothing wrong in this desire, for we are everywhere in the Sacred Word urged to pray. Such texts as these are authority for our anxiety to wield this wonderful power: "Men ought always to pray" (Luke 18. 1). "Watch ye therefore, and pray always," (Luke 21. 36). "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;" (Col. 4. 2). "Pray without ceasing". (1 Thess. 5. 17). "I will therefore that men pray every where." (1 Tim. 2. 8). "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4. 7). It is evident from these and many other similar texts that God desires us to pray. And yet we cannot deny that we are often disappointed at the apparent failure of many of our prayers to work any result. Something seems to hinder them. This is true, for even if they be according to God's will and in the name of Christ Jesus, there are three hindrances to prayer, namely Sin, Selfishness, and Satan. These three barriers to the effectiveness of our prayers will bear careful consideration.

If we are conscious of sin in our hearts we cannot pray acceptably; for God cannot work through a heart that is charged with sin, as the Scriptures declare: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66. 18). We note that Jesus Christ always prayed acceptably, because in him was no sin (2 Cor. 5. 21; Heb. 4. 15). But his followers cannot claim to have no sin, as the Apostle says: "If we say...we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1. 8). One who is begotten of God will not habitually practice sin, for the "seed" of God remains in him. (1 John 3. 9) Those who continue in sins are not begotten of the Holy Spirit and are therefore not children of God, but, rather, children, of the devil (1 John 3. 10,11). The prayers of such, that is, of those who claim to be followers of the Lord and yet hate their brethren (1 John 3. 13-15) are abhorrent to God (Psa. 109. 1-7).

The Hindrance of Sin can be Overcome

If the child of God has consciousness of sin in his heart, he can have it cleansed away by confession in the name of the Advocate, Jesus Christ

the Righteous. (1 John 1. 9; 1 John 2. 1,2) We must purge out the evil—malice, evil-surmisings, etc. “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” (2 Tim. 2. 21) We must stop evil-speaking, if we have been indulging in this selfish form of luxury. (James 4. 11) When we feel strongly inclined to judge another adversely as we sometimes do, let us stop and think: even Jesus judged no man; and if any had good reason to judge, Jesus had; yet he always refrained and committed the matter to God. (John 8. 15; John 12. 47) We are told to judge nothing before the time, and not to judge one another. (Rom. 14. 13; 1 Cor. 4. 5) God has now committed all judgment unto the Son, who is able to judge righteously; but the Son has not committed judgment to us. We cannot read motives, therefore we cannot judge righteously.

The Apostle says: “If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1 Cor. 11. 31,32) By means of prayer we shall turn our judging minds in upon our own hearts and see if there be any evil way there; then confess and get our sins forgiven, remembering that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness whenever we sincerely confess and call to our aid our Advocate. When we approach our heavenly Father in this attitude, we shall know that our prayers are honoured; for the cleansed heart is sensitive to the response of God. In the words of the Psalmist we shall be able to exclaim: “Verily God hath heard me; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.”—Psa. 66. 19,20.

Should we ever be so unfortunate as to think we have reached a point where we no longer need bring our judging mind to bear upon our own heart, and that we may now turn our attention outward and do a little judging of our brethren, let us note carefully what the Scriptures say about this; for the words are very pointed—they have a cutting edge as sharp as a razor: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17. 9) But if it should happen, owing to the heart being so deceitful, that we cannot perceive any special cause for judging ourselves, then the Lord will give us some aid in the matter. As surely as we are begotten of the Holy Spirit, just so surely shall we have this personal inward judging to do; and if we do not ask the Lord’s aid

voluntarily, then our Master will give it unasked, for he loves us. (Rev. 3. 19) Far better for us to do the matter voluntarily, as the Apostle advises: “Let a man examine himself.”—1 Cor. 11. 28; 2 Cor. 13. 5

Ask the Lord to turn his searchlight into our hearts. In the words of Psal. 139. 23,24, say: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.” Don’t flinch, but with the searchlight shining its piercing rays upon our heart, let us look thereon steadily, and we shall literally tremble to behold what iniquity lies there! Aye, and the more honest we are the more we will tremble. But let us not faint, but confess, and God will send his power to enable us to amend. (Phil. 2. 12,13) After confession, we may then pray in the words of the Psalmist: “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me...Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee...A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” (Psa. 51) We shall be fit to judge righteously along with Christ our Lord, in the “Day” which has been appointed by God.—Acts 17. 31; 1 Cor. 6. 2; Rev. 20. 4-6; Dan. 7. 20-27

Next time—The Hindrance of Selfishness Must be Eliminated

ME



JESUS is the SPIRITUAL ROCK.

Through Him came God’s provision for His people in the wilderness. JESUS says...Even as I gave Israel water to drink from an impossible source, so will living waters stream from the hard places in your life, if you look to Me...

At the Names of Jesus
Sarah Hornsby

For I wish you not to be ignorant, Brethren. That our Fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the Sea; and that all were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the Sea; and that all ate the same spiritual Food, and all drank the same spiritual Drink; for they drank (water) from a Spiritual Rock which followed them; (but the Rock was the Anointed.) 1 Cor. 10. 1-4 Diaglott

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Extracts from the Bible Study Monthly on a New Testament book—Part 4

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

On the priesthood of all believers

The sheer wonder of the New Testament Christianity is that in its simplicity it is sublime. The words “*Ye are a...royal priesthood*” (1 Peter 2. 9) were addressed to a very ordinary people, who by reason of their relationship to the King-Priest were constituted a royal priesthood. Every Christian a priest with the inestimable privilege of direct access into the Divine Presence, is a fundamental New Testament principle. It clearly teaches the priesthood of all believers. Alas! ritualistic Christendom has drifted—tragically drifted—from the apostolic position.

It may help us if we consider for a moment how we first came to read of the priest in the Old Testament. When man rebelled against God, the personal intimacy which he had enjoyed with God came to an abrupt conclusion, and so there arose the necessity of finding some means for the re-establishment of communion with God. Since access into the Divine Presence became possible only by way of sacrifice, the sacrifice demanded a priesthood.

In patriarchal times, the head of each family was the household priest. For example, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob built altars and offered sacrifices to Jehovah. After the flood, Noah offered representatively on behalf of those who were saved in the Ark. Job offered sacrifices for his sons. So the story continued until the priesthood became a most elaborate system. At last we see the priestly class quite distinct from the remainder of Israel: its members alone could draw near to God, and no other Israelite had such a privileged position. But when our Lord, the great High Priest who offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, came, all such distinctions were removed: “*the veil of the temple was rent in twain*” (Matt. 27. 51); the former order had passed away. Now all believers have an equal right and privilege to draw near to God.

New Testament Christianity recognises no special distinctive priesthood—all Christians are alike priests. Observe that in 1 Peter 2. 9 Christian believers are spoken of together, and together they make up one indivisible priesthood. A distinctive sacerdotal (ecclesiastical) class, in

contrast to the rest of the believers, is not only unknown to the New Testament, but contradictory to its whole spirit. When the apostles founded churches, they never linked them up with any priestly conceptions such as had obtained in the Old Testament. We never read of priests and people, but of bishops (elders), deacons and saints. So that when a man claims for himself that he is a priest, beyond and above the sense in which all Christians are so, we must reject his pretensions.

We must be careful to distinguish between the priestly privileges which are the right of all believers, and the calling of those qualified to be shepherds and teachers of the Christian assembly. Their distinction is one of gift rather than privilege.

It is vital that we should lay hold of the thought that ALL Christian believers are constituted a priesthood. Peter was not addressing a privileged class when he said “Ye are a royal priesthood”; when we are in Christ, we have our priestly functions to fulfil. This royal priesthood is not made up of those who could plead any merit in themselves or declare any derivation of grace from men by apostolic succession and the like. It is composed of all those who have been united to the great High Priest. This is not some outward and visible order, but is of a much nobler fashion.

The priests of Aaron’s line were priests by birth and so are we—by a high spiritual birth which brings the priesthood with it. Were they anointed? At their consecration the blood was sprinkled on ear, hand and foot (Lev. 8. 24). We assume our spiritual priesthood by the anointing of the Spirit of God, which dwells in us.

Have we not the listening ear which waits to respond to his voice? And have not hands and feet come under the same binding act of consecration? That is why we sing—

*“Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.”*

For us there are no priests save those who are in Christ, and of ALL who are in him we say, indeed the New Testament says, that they are priests. To us all is given the right of access into the presence of God. *“For*

through him we...have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2. 18). “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4. 16). “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus....let us draw near...” (Heb. 10. 19, 22).

This, then, is what we understand by the doctrine of the priesthood of believers.

Now it will follow that in our thinking we develop this truth of profound significance and thus come to see what our priesthood means to us personally, and how it enables us to function in the interests of others. To us personally, our priesthood should mean worship, confession and sacrifice.

Worship! To worship God aright, it is not essential to have altars, candles, images and vestments. “The heart of worship is worship (or adoration) in the heart.” All the ritualistic trappings of men are a sign of spiritual retrogression. As men drifted spiritually, they came more and more to rely upon externals. Said our Lord, *“the true worshippers...worship the Father in spirit and in truth”*. (John 4. 23)

We worship God as priests whenever in our hearts we think magnificently about God. And this we may do when far removed from any earthly temple. But how much do we know of genuine spiritual worship, that adoring contemplation which causes us to cry out “My God, how wonderful thou art”?

Confession! It is significant that though the apostles had received a unique Divine commission, they never heard confessions as such, and never pronounced absolution. The confession of our sins is essentially a personal matter. And the promise is given, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1. 9). Let there be with any son of Adam’s race a sincere confession with the resolve to amend his ways; to him there is given pardon full and free. We have no need of a priest, we are members of the priesthood.

We sometimes hear evangelists speak of a lack of sense of sin in the

world today. That is not the real problem. The problem is within the Believers. Is it not because of our own inadequate conception of the holiness of God that we do not perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin? We may rejoice in the fact that we do not need a priest to act in our interests, but do we fulfil our own priestly functions for ourselves? There will never come a time in the life of any one of us when we shall not need so to do.

Sacrifice! That is a priestly function—to offer up sacrifices. “*Ye also, as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*” (1 Peter 2. 5). These are spiritual sacrifices as opposed to the literal. We bring no oxen, sheep, goats, and so on. He became the perfect sacrifice “to put away sin”. We offer up spiritual sacrifices.

We offer the sacrifice of ourselves. “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*” (Rom. 12. 1). The word “present” in this verse is a technical word for a priest’s action. And is there not a very real sense in which this is exemplified in the New Testament practice of Baptism? It declares that our lives should be lived as a continual offering to God, with a continual denial of self.

We offer the sacrifice of praise. “*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*” (Heb. 13. 15) The singing of a hymn of praise is a solemn and significant act: it is a priestly offering. How can our lips be mute and our attitude careless and indifferent during the singing of a hymn to God’s praise? Needless to say, the sacrifice is invested with deeper significance when the singer is being beaten about by the contrary winds of life.

We offer the sacrifice of all good works as a priesthood. “*But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*” (Heb. 13. 16). Let us consider then how our priesthood enables us to function in the interests of others, as Intercessors, as Messengers and as Benefactors from God.

Intercessors! There is the privilege of not only praying for ourselves, but the responsibility of praying for others. The priests of old were set apart to

speak with God on behalf of the rest of the congregation. Now, the word comes to the royal priesthood, *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men”* (1 Tim. 2 .1)

We must needs pray for the Church of Christ, members of which we ourselves are, both with regard to its life and its witness; surely there will also be a special concentration of priestly intercessory prayer for any who have slipped from their earliest steadfastness. If we are in line with New Testament teaching, we shall pray too for all who are in positions of authority in national and civic life. (1 Tim. 2. 1-2). In fact, the scope for the priestly exercise of intercession would seem to be almost boundless. And if this be so now, how much more will it be true during the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ, when the privilege will be ours of using our priestly office so as to assist all families of the earth attain their right relationship with their God?

Messengers! We have no right to forgive sin, but it is ours to proclaim the gospel of pardon. We are to awaken others to a deeper sense of their responsibility to God, and to the doing of his Will. In Old Testament times, the priests had the keeping of the silver trumpets. They were to arouse the people. It was theirs to sound the trumpet on the new moon, to proclaim Sabbath and jubilee. They gave the alarm of war. In the wilderness, the trumpets summoned the tribes to march or bid them halt according as the Lord commanded. So we are to proclaim the message Jesus committed to his disciples, and so to us. (Mark 16. 15-16). Yet while proclaiming this message now, we must not forget that *“strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”*. (Matt. 7. 14).

Benefactors from God! The people of Israel were blessed after the priest had been in the presence of God, and the New Testament teaches that the royal priesthood is to go forth into the world as benefactors from God. That is to be our function and ministry in every place. *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* Gal. 6. 10).

We may think of God’s priests as working in the office, in the factory, the shop, the school, or wherever they may be. They live in the presence of

God, and go forth to bless all whose lives they touch.

May the thought ever be with us that we are not only a royal priesthood when we meet together in our place of worship. We carry our temple with us since the body itself has become a temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are arrayed in priestly garments as we do his Will.

What dignity God has placed upon us! Are we of the royal priesthood? Then let us ever *“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye (we) are called”*. Eph. 4. 1). (March April '86)

1 Peter 2. 4-5 (MKJV) tells us that; *“Having been drawn to Him, a living Stone, indeed rejected by men, but elect, precious with God; you also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* Peter calls Christ a living Stone, a title that teaches His followers that He is their protection and security. Whilst Paul, at the end of the second chapter of his letter to the Ephesians says that Jesus is the foundation on which they are built. He is the chief Corner stone, which unites the whole number of believers into one perpetual temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric, a foundation that is everlasting and precious beyond comparison. And to be built on Jesus, means to believe in him completely and to commit our life to Him. (May June '15)

INTO THE LIGHT

The darkness has gone for the sun has arisen,
 Deep shadows enhancing the beauty of day
 And we must throw off the dark cloak of our prison
 To bathe in the glory which lightens our way.

Your word, yes, your that brought light out of darkness
 Speaks now to my heart to step out of sin's night,
 To cast off my shackles of doubt and of sadness.
 A new day is dawning. Rejoice in the light.

Through shadows still reach out fingers of sorrow
 We turn to the brightness and warmth of the sun,
 For here we find healing, fresh strength and strong purpose.
 O Light of the World, yes, your kingdom is come.*

Pauline Lewis

TIMES AND SEASONS

8. The Period of the Kings

The period of the Kings of Israel and Judah commences with the accession of David and ends with the dethronement of Zedekiah at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. In some systems of chronology it does include also the forty years' reign of Saul, but Saul's reign, more or less contemporaneous with the era of Samuel the last of the Judges, more properly falls within the Period of the Judges. The accession of David at Hebron following the deaths of Samuel and Saul is therefore taken here as the starting-point.

The apparently obvious method of establishing the length of this period is by adding together the reigns of the kings both of Israel and Judah, all of which are given in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. The many chronologists of the 19th century blithely adopted this practice, and soon ran into trouble. The addition of the reigns of the Kings of Judah produced a total of some nineteen years longer than that indicated by those of the Kings of Israel. In an endeavour to find a reason for this a great deal of time was spent unravelling and elucidating what are called the "synchronisms" of the two Books.

A "synchronism" is a statement that, for example, King A of Israel commenced to reign, or died, in the *n*th year of the reign of King B of Judah—or vice versa. There are a great many such synchronisms and these, if they could be relied upon, would provide a kind of interlocking check on the kings' reigns which should allow the total period to be determined with accuracy. Unfortunately, they do not. It proved impossible to reconcile the statements of the synchronisms with the duration of the successive kings' reigns as recorded in the O.T. The amount of possible variation was anything up to thirty years. Since the prime object of most of the chronologists was to establish a definite date for the Second Advent, this was a serious handicap. In most cases the dilemma was resolved by ignoring the line of the kings of Israel and considering only that of Judah, on the rather precarious basis that since Judah was the less godless of the two nations its records were more likely to be correct. Even so, unanimity could not be attained. The labours of the leading investigators on the subject produced figures ranging from 467 to 484 years, as witness the following examples:-

Usher	467	Cunninghame	483
Clinton	469	Bliss	484
Bowen	473	Hales	484
Russell	473	Jarvis	484

During the last century the position changed. The work of dispassionate historians and investigators has clarified the issue and revealed in part the causes of the old uncertainties.

The first and principal cause of the apparent discrepancies is that, as might be expected, no king reigned an exact whole number of years, and the sum of the stated years of each king's reign is not therefore a reliable guide to the true total. It has been found in the last century that Israel, like some neighbour nations, had a system whereby the fraction of the last year of a king's reign remaining after his death was counted as the first year of his successor's reign and called his "accession year". Thus this year would be counted twice in a plain summation of the reigns as recorded. The last year of Solomon was also the first year of Rehoboam, and so on. This alone makes a difference of about twenty years.

The second cause, also not suspected over a century ago because the Bible only rarely mentions the fact, is that in some cases the heir to the throne acted as regent or co-ruler with his father when the latter was old, and the years of his regency were often counted in with his reign as well as with that of his father. This gives another indeterminate area of anything up to forty years or so.

The third and quite important aspect is that the progress of research into the history of ancient nations, particularly Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, has made such great strides during the past hundred years or so that the task of fitting the recorded contacts of Israel's kings with these peoples has been considerably facilitated and this acts as a confirmatory check on the Biblical records.

In the light of this new knowledge modern chronologists have found it much easier to reconcile the apparently conflicting statements in the Books of Kings and Chronicles so that it is no longer necessary to rely upon the mechanical addition of the figures given for each king's reign to arrive at an approximation of the period. Present day investigators such as

Dougherty, Parker, Dubberstein, Finegan and Rutherford have come to various conclusions all lying between the quite close limits of 425 to 432 years from David to Zedekiah—appreciably less than the 467 to 484 of the older chronologists.

These more recent findings fit in very well with what is already well established as the times of the beginning and the end of the period of the Kings. The capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the fall of the Jewish monarchy under Zedekiah occurred in 586 B.C. (In some quarters 585 and 588 have been advocated but in the light of all available evidence 586 seems well established.) With the Exodus from Egypt taking place in the 18th Egyptian dynasty and the plain statement of 1 Kings 6. 1. respecting the time elapsing between the Exodus and the founding of Solomon's Temple, it follows that the latter event must be dated at about 974 B.C., the area of doubt about precise dating of the 18th Dynasty accounting for some latitude here. This would imply the accession of David at about 1018 B.C., and a span of 432 years or thereabouts for the period of the Kings.

The data in Kings and Chronicles does not permit any more definite figure for the period; plenty of students have tackled the problem and each one places a different value upon one or another of the apparently contradictory statements and so arrives at a slightly different result. It is left to an entirely different book of the Old Testament to cast what may be a very significant light upon the problem.

Eleven years before the end of the monarchy, under Zedekiah, Ezekiel the priest was taken captive into Babylon with other Jewish captives by Nebuchadnezzar. Five years later he received his commission as prophet to announce unto Israel the Divine reprobation for their apostasies, to call them to repentance and acknowledgment of their transgressions, and to declare to them God's future intentions and purposes.

As prelude to his prophetic ministry (Ezek. chap. 4) he was to prepare, on a clay tablet in the manner customary in Babylon, a representation of Jerusalem undergoing siege and capture, a picture prophecy which was realised in truth six years later, when the Babylonians captured and destroyed the city and Temple, thus bringing the era of the Kings to an end. Associated with this visible model of the doomed city he was to

perform a symbolic action in which, in ritual fashion, he personally assumed the national guilt for the whole period of their transgression.

Three hundred and ninety days for Israel and forty for Judah, each day to be representative of a year, was the Divine edict. No explanation of the significance of these particular numbers is offered, only that they constituted the period of the nation's culpability leading up to this final judgement in the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the national life.

The passage is worth reading. It is found in Ezek. 4. 4-6. After preparing the clay tablet representing the city, Ezekiel was instructed to "*Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity,... three hundred and ninety days; so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year*".

The implication is fairly clear. Ezekiel was to take upon himself in a ritual manner the whole burden of the national transgressions throughout the period of the kingship which was now coming to an end, and lie down with them in front of the city which had always been the symbol of that kingship and which was now about to be destroyed. Four hundred and thirty years of apostasy and transgression, divided into two periods of 390 and 40, were to be brought up to a focus in that final judgment on Jerusalem which was now only six years away. During the whole of that time kings of the line of David had ruled in Jerusalem—apart from David's first seven years at Hebron—and for a major part of the time rival kings had also ruled in Ephraim, the north. Now all that was to come to an end. "*Remove the diadem, and take off the crown:...I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him*" (Ezek. 21. 26-27). That was the Divine sentence upon the unworthy royal line and the equally unworthy people.

If then this span of 430 years is intended to cover the period of Israel's kings, we have here an indication, provided by the Holy Spirit, of the precise duration of the era under review. The rather indeterminate

approximation of 432 to 425 years can be replaced by the more definite 430. In such case we have two Divinely provided overall figures to replace the ambiguity of the varied and oft-times confusing calculations of the periods of the Judges and the Kings. The 480 years of 1 Kings 6. 1 and the 430 of Ezek. 4. 4-6 can eliminate at a stroke all the elaborate fitting together of isolated statements which in the past have characterised efforts to elucidate the chronology of these periods.

The acid test of this application of the passage in Ezekiel is the significance of the two sections of the period, 390 and 40 years. The left side, 390 years for Israel; the right side, 40 years for Judah. This has to be capable of a fitting explanation.

To the Hebrews, the east was always in front. The left side therefore was to the north, the northern tribes of Israel, headed by Ephraim. The right was to the south, the southern tribes headed by Judah. The complete 430 years finishing in 586 B.C. must necessarily start in 1016 B.C. which is the date of the accession of David. The junction between the 390 and 40 years falls on the year 626 B.C. and the historical significance of this year must be examined.

The instruments of God's judgements on Israel were the twin empires of Assyria and Babylon. During the greater part of the period from David to Zedekiah Assyria was the dominant power and the great scourge of Israel. Sennacherib the Assyrian was named in Isaiah "*the rod of mine (God's) anger*" (Isa. 10. 5). Although the Assyrians are not mentioned in the O.T. until the time of Ahaz, Assyrian inscriptions back to the revolt of the Ten Tribes mention contacts and conflicts with Israel's kings so that almost from the time of the disruption at the death of Solomon, they were a thorn in Israel's side. Towards the end, however, and after the Ten Tribes had been taken into captivity, the Assyrian empire collapsed before the rising power of Babylon, and a new instrument of judgment, mainly directed against Judah, came upon the scene. The date of this collapse and the accession of Babylon's conquering king, Nabopolassar, father of the famous Nebuchadnezzar, was 626 B.C., the end of the 390 years and the beginning of the 40. Jeremiah records this dual infliction of judgement upon the nation, first Assyria and then Babylon, when he says (50. 17). "*Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadnezzar king of*

Babylon hath broken his bones”.

The same year, 626 B.C., also marks the final end of what remained of the Ten-Tribe kingdom, most of whom had been carried into captivity to Assyria at the fall of Samaria nearly a century earlier, and the consolidation of what was left into the southern kingdom of Judah. The 12th year of the reign of good king Josiah was marked by a zeal for reform in which he purged Judah from idolatry and restored true worship (2 Kings 22 & 23; 2 Chron. 34. 3-7). This was the year 627 B.C. Following his successful operation in Judah, he next went into the northern territory, inhabited now by a smattering of Israelites and some alien peoples, and wiped out every trace of idolatry there, destroying the idol sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan and slaying the apostate priests. It is almost certain that a work of this magnitude would require more than a year for its execution so that an assumption that the significant date 626 B.C. saw its completion would appear to be amply justified.

Thus seen, Ezekiel's 390 years denoted the period from the accession of David to the complete end of the northern kingdom during which Assyrian power was in the ascendancy as the instrument of judgment, and the 40 years the later period during which Judah represented the entire nation and Babylon was the instrument of judgment. The two periods together give 430 years for the period of the Kings, a figure which reasonably satisfies all relevant data in the O.T., and since it is found in a setting which is not history but revelation it may well be concluded that here is an instance of the Holy Spirit supplying a positive link which can only be approximately estimated by other means.

This completes the chain of chronological links furnished by the Bible and commencing with Gen. chap. 5. After 586 B.C. there are no more links; but modern knowledge of ancient history is now so well advanced that an accurate knowledge of chronology since then is well established from sources outside the Scriptures.

AOH

THE GREAT MULTITUDE

All references NKJV unless otherwise stated

The Great Multitude in Revelation 7 has been a matter of much interest to students of the Bible. Many have pondered their hopes and expectations as well as the joys they will experience and how they fit in with other groups of people mentioned in the Bible. But apart from that chapter, are this group written about or pictured anywhere else in the scriptures?

Psalm 45. 13-15 says “The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; Her clothing *is* woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colours; The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought”. Psalm 45 is written describing the bridegroom, the bride and her companions. The writer’s heart is overflowing with a goodly theme describing the bridegroom, the bride and her companions.

The Bridegroom: Discovering who the bridegroom represents in this psalm is easy, it is a description firstly of Jesus in his human form and then as the victorious King. One can only imagine what a perfect man would appear like, but there is an answer to what is meant by “Grace is poured upon Your lips” (Psalm 45. 2) in Luke 4. 22 when those in the synagogue upon hearing Jesus speak stated. “There was a general stir of admiration; they were surprised that words of such grace should fall from his lips.” (NEB) Verse 4 of the Psalm is cited by the writer to the Hebrews, “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Hebrews 1. 2-3) Paul confirms who the Psalm represents when he writes “But to the Son He says, ‘Your throne is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom’” (Hebrews 1. 8)

The Bride: The description of the Bride opens with the “Kings’ daughters are among Your honourable women; At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; Forget your own people also, and your father’s house;” (Psalm 45. 9-10) How similar are the sentiments of these verses to the words of Jesus in

Matthew 10. 37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” “The King will greatly desire your beauty” (v. 11) is interesting when you look at the aspect that the bride is drawn from all the nations of the earth, fallen mankind. Paul explains in Ephesians 5. 25-27 “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Verse 13 (KJV) of the Psalm reads “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.” The description here is one of inward beauty and Peter writes “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 3. 3-4) The gold interwoven into her clothing could not only show her status as Queen and her position as having the Divine nature, but also her faithfulness as Peter states “so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than that gold which perishes, though proved by Fire, may be found to (result in) Praise and Glory and Honour at the Revelation of Jesus Christ;” (1 Peter 1. 7 Diaglott)

The Virgin, her companions: The question arises to who are the companions and how did they come to be with the bride on the way to her wedding. The fact that they were virgins suggests that they were pure and had not been defiled. They are both going to the wedding and the wedding is in Heaven then they must both be spirit beings.

All the virgins started from the same position, fallen mankind. They had responded to Christ’s message during the Gospel Age (Christian Era). Not all that heard Christ’s message during His time on earth were to be selected. Christ explains “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6. 44) And also in verse 65, “Because of this I have said to you, that no one can come to me, unless it may be given him from the Father.” (Diaglott) With the death and resurrection of Christ, a way, not previously available, was open. Christ’s death had paid the ransom to free mankind from the death sentence passed on them through Adam’s disobedience. Another effect of Christ’s death and resurrection was symbolized with the tearing of the veil

in the temple which demonstrated the separation of God from mankind. Access was now available through the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice.

The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles at Pentecost signalled that the way to "the prize of the upward (high) call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3. 14) was opened. In Peter's speech to the Jews at that time he makes the statement "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (forgiveness) of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and for all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2. 38-39) The message was to the Jew first and then also to the Greeks (Gentiles) (Luke 24. 47; Rom 1. 16; Rom 2. 9-10) and this was the message that Christ gave at His first advent "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15. 24)

Gentiles. Peter received a vision from God explaining that the time of exclusive favour to the Jews had ended and that the way was now opened for the Gentiles to come in. Peter then spoke these words "I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness (does what is right) is accepted by Him." (Acts 10. 34-35) Three chapters later Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13. 46-48).

Some may say that God is unfair, not all who hear His word are called, not all called will be chosen, not all that make a covenant of Sacrifice will receive the same position or honour. He makes decisions on what will eventually bring about the fulfilment of His purpose. There are numerous examples in the Old Testament of decisions made that run contrary to man's thinking. He chose Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, and Israel (although the least in number) over all the nations on earth.

The selection of the tribe of Levi, to serve God in the Tabernacle, demonstrates God's absolute power to choose who He will and what

positions He assigns, contrary to man's wisdom. Levi's character was one of violence to man and cruelty to animals. Jacob wanted no part of Levi's council and cursed him shortly before he died. (Gen. 49. 5-7) Aaron who was the leader of the tribe of Levi at the time of the Exodus also appears a strange choice. In Exodus 32. 4 it is written that he instigated the making of the Golden Calf and then pronounced "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

The tribe of Levi's selection could be said to typify the choosing of the Church of the first born. (Hebrews 12. 23) The Levites (22,000) replaced the firstborn who were saved in Egypt. (Numbers 3. 40-51) It is interesting to also note that all the tribe, not just the priests had no inheritance in the land. "The priests, the Levites—all the tribe of Levi—shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of LORD made by fire, and His portion. Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the LORD is their inheritance, as He said to them." (Deut. 18. 1-2) How similar is this to the consecrated follows of Christ down through the Gospel Age, who have to put from their minds earthly things "for our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3. 20) The Levites were spoken of as God's inheritance in the same way that Paul spoke of the saints when addressing the Ephesians. (Eph. 1. 18)

Although both Levi and Aaron had failings, when it came to Moses' question "Whoso is on Jehovah's side, let him come unto me" it was the sons of Levi that answered the call and separated themselves, maybe a picture that the Church must separate itself from the world and especially from the false religious systems. The tribe of Levi had four divisions with God selecting a different role for each family. Aaron and his sons serviced as the High Priest and the priesthood who did the sacrifices on behalf of the people of Israel. The Kohathites, the nearest kin of Aaron's house, held the highest office, the bearer of all the vessels of the sanctuary. The Gershonites had to carry the tent hangings and curtains. The sons of Merari carried the boards, bars and the pillars of the Tabernacle. The Levites also camped on the four sides of the Tabernacle putting a distance between the Tabernacle and the people of Israel.

The division of the Levites demonstrates the difference between the Bride and the Great Multitude. Both are God's inheritance, He and He alone

makes the decision on what place they hold. Like the Levites they have no inheritance in the earth, signifying their Heavenly Spiritual position. In Revelation the Bride is shown as sitting with Christ on His throne while the Great Multitude is standing before the throne. They are “in the presence of” the throne of God. This from the Greek word *enopion* (G1799) is often translated as presence. It writes, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and (have) washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple (sanctuary). And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.” (Revelation 7. 14-15) They serve in the Temple sanctuary. This is the Greek word *naos* meaning the main part of the Temple as opposed to the Greek word *hieron* meaning the Temple and its court and environs. The fact that they came through great tribulation may indicate that they had great difficulty because they had not totally put their trust in God, at times relying on their own strength.

Jesus in the Parable of the Sower also has a division. Apart from the four types of ground where the seed was sown, the seed that fell on the good ground brought forward thirty, sixty or hundred times what was sown (Matt. 13. 23). This shows even a division among the seed that brought forward much fruit and suggests a division among the overcoming class.

The Bride has the same divine nature as her husband, Christ, sitting with Him on His throne having been “more than conquerors”. (Rom 8. 37) The Great Multitude is mentioned in Revelations 7. 9-14 as “a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands; and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’...Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him....“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and (have) washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The white signifies their status as virgins, because they washed them in the blood of the Lamb even during great tribulation.

God’s divine purpose will be fulfilled as spoken of in Revelation 21. 3-5 (KJV) “And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the

tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall 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...any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."

In summary the Bride and the Great Multitude are pictured in the Bible in different ways at different times. In Psalm 45 it is as the Bride and her companions, in the Tabernacle arrangement as the Aaronic priesthood and Levites, in Revelation 7 as the 144,000 and Great Multitude as well as those who brought forward higher and lower fruitage in the Parable of the Sower. Both occupy a position of beauty and honour and are overcomers to help in the time when the kingdoms of our God have come on earth.

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."...Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (Revelation 19. 6-9)

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Every phase of life brings a fresh set of problems and opportunities to grow in grace and knowledge, into full maturity.

*Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook
Published by Harvest Activities*

*Truth's like a jewel reflecting the sun,
With colours sublime in each ray,
Or a light for at sea in a tower on the rocks
To guide the great ships on their way.*

Poems of the Way

NOTICES

BIBLE STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

Afternoon Tea Wednesday 15 August—Afternoon Tea Sunday 19 August 2018

High Leigh Conference Centre, Lord Street, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, EN11 8SG

Theme; Revelation 2 & 3

DAY VISITORS WELCOME

Please book with the Accommodation Secretary

or for a programme & booking form —please contact Nicholas Charcharos

email—nick.charcharos@btinternet.com

2ND UK BIBLE STUDENTS CONVENTION

FRIDAY 26-SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER 2018

Convention text ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’ (1 Pet. 1. 16 RSV)

For information, please email Dina Hinde (dina6ro@yahoo.com), Dorota Pilch

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OUR COMFORT IN SORROW

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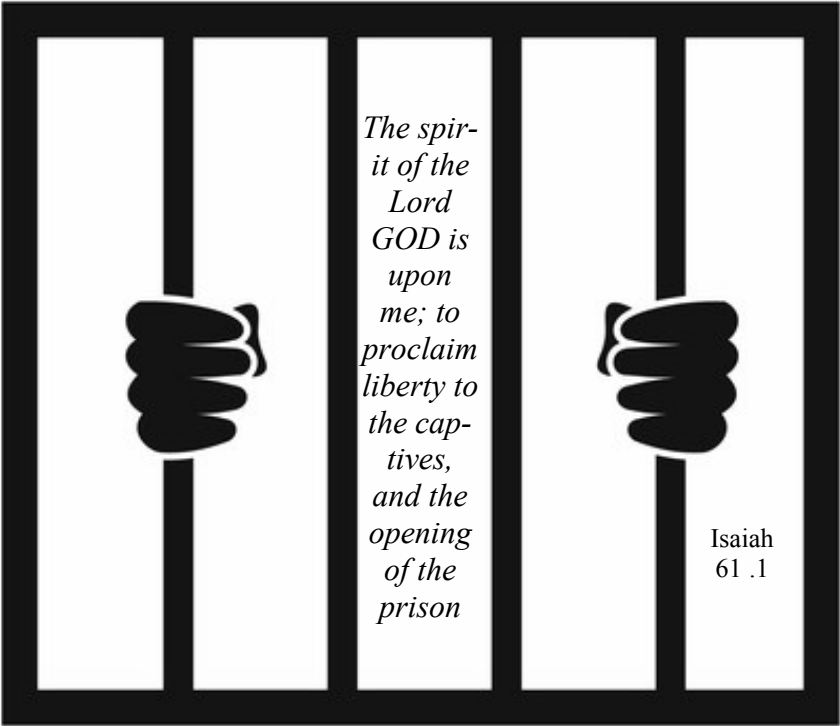
BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4. 15 NRSV).

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.
Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." (Isa. 61. 1-3 NKJV)

Prisons have played their part in the Biblical record from the imprisonment of Joseph (Gen. 39) for a crime he did not commit to the New Testament accounts of the internment of John The Baptist (Matt. 14), Peter (Acts 12) and Paul (Acts 16). Paul and Silas were imprisoned for calling out an evil spirit out of a woman. For Paul one result of his various imprisonments were the prison epistles which laid down important guidance and truth for the modern day church.

The Tower of London was a prison for some of the most notable people in British history from the likes of Anne Boleyn, Queen Elizabeth I, Thomas Cranmer and William Penn.

Conditions in such institutions for the ordinary man were very poor. The aim was that people should be punished for doing wrong by removing their freedom and keeping the population safer by keeping those who would continue to commit crimes against others. As time passed by reformers looked at prison conditions and to the reform of the individual prisoner.

Peter wrote about the ‘spirits in prison’ that Jesus went to visit during the 40 days prior to his ascension. The question is why and what purpose did it serve? Was it just to confirm the penalty for previous sins or is there some hope of reform?

Elizabeth Fry was a well-known reformer. She was brought up at Earlham Hall in East Anglia and spent most of her married life in East Ham and Forest Gate. She campaigned for schools for those children interned with their mothers, against transportation to distant lands like Australia and that prison should be about rehabilitation. Robert Peel got the Gaols Act of 1823 through the Houses of Parliament and further acts were passed such as the Prisons Act of 1835.

Perhaps it should not be surprising at the end of the Christian Era (Gospel Age) that prison reforms should come at the time when we look forward to the reign of Christ and His church during the Millennial Age.

Since the days of Adam and Eve and The Fall their offspring have been constrained in ‘the prison house of death’ otherwise called ‘death’s gloomy prison’. But the sentence will not last forever and we anticipate the time when all earth’s loved ones shall soon come out from that prison for there is one that has the key to death (Rev. 1. 18)

Forget injuries; never forget kindness.

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook
Harvest Activities

The Royal Mail here is the U.K. is experiencing issues with the service to Nigeria and some packages are being returned—‘Mail Service Suspended’. We apologise if that has affected you receiving the monthly this year.

Magazine content. What is published is believed to have a wide interest, but everything printed may not necessarily be the opinion of the editor and his colleagues.

THROUGH PRISON BARS

All references NASB unless otherwise stated

We all live in a sin-sick world, trapped by invisible forces beyond our control. In many ways we are no different than those who are incarcerated behind bars in a prison house. In the stores and shopping we see the long sad faces on those who pass by, many, who have no hope except a bleak outlook. Those of us who know and love the Lord want to reach out and comfort these downtrodden.

We find comfort in the words written by David in the 23rd Psalm where he says “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for You are with me.”

Like sheep we have mob instincts, fears, timidity, stubbornness, and yes even stupidity. Yet in spite all these adverse characteristics, Christ chooses to call us by name, and makes us his own delight!

I want to share with you a mental picture which I’m sure will never leave your mind. It is a picture of all the peoples of the world trapped in this death condition, which we will represent by the sheep. It is a pathetic picture of people the world over begging to be released from their condition. It is a picture of the sheep under the management of the shepherd Satan!

Have you ever driven by a farm and looked through the fence to see sheep that were weak, and infested with disease and parasites? These would be the ones metaphorically who would be under the control of Satan. On the other field you would see sheep that were healthy and happy. Then you might ask yourself the question, where do I fit in? The sickly ones are under the care of the adversary, and the healthy under the loving care of our Lord!

Yet we know the picture doesn’t stop there. For we know that the lost and ill-cared for sheep will be redeemed. This is confirmed for us in chapter one of the book of Revelation, verses 17 & 18. The Apostle John is confirming this to us. “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.

And He placed His right hand upon me, saying, *‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades.’*”

This condition of imprisonment started many years ago in the garden of Eden. We read in Gen. 2. 15-17, the words of God which set this in motion that which would result in ultimate death, for the entire human family. It is important to note that these commandments were given directly to father Adam, starting with verse 15, *“The LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.’”*

And as we know that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, as David says so eloquently in Psalms 90. 4. After partaking of the tree with his wife Eve, the punishment went into effect, for we know Adam lived for a period of 930 years and died. Just short of the one day of the Lord!

This started the cascade of sin and death and imprisonment of the human family until this very day. In reference to this tragedy, the Apostle Paul gives us hope with this scripture found in 1 Corinthians 15. 22 (NKJV), we quote, *“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”* In regard to this comparison we again reference chapter 15 starting with verse 45, *“So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven”*. So here we have the clear picture of Christ as the Redeemer of father Adam. In doing so He cancelled the debt incurred by Adam’s disobedience!

The result of this great blessing will be that ultimately all, will be released from this prison house of death, which will occur in the millennium. In the 35th chapter of Isaiah we read of this yet future blessing. Envision in your mind this picture of the world of mankind under the loving care of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Righteous! The good Shepherd. *“The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it will blossom profusely and shout of joy.”* Then we read from verse 5 of the blessings to be showered down on mankind

under the care of the Great Shepherd! Verses 5 and 6, *“Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute (dumb) will shout for joy.”* And the assurance will be given that no harm will come to any as we read in verses 9 and 10, *“No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; these will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.”*



This is why Jesus taught us to pray, *“Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.”*

The conditions in this house of death are intolerable! Yet sadly today there are many who have little or no faith to call upon. These are they, who are still trapped under the tutelage of Satan whether they know it or not! The power of the adversary is as rampant today as it was in the days of old. We are beginning to witness the rise of satanic meetings all over the earth. Truly men are becoming more lovers of pleasure, than lovers of God. These statements of the Apostle Paul are becoming more prevalent today than ever before! 2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 1 through 4. *“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant.”* We see these things all around us today. The news coverage is covered by stories of wealthy people flaunting their wealth in the face of the poor and downtrodden! These are the methods of the Devil. *“Disobedient to parents. ungrateful, unholy.”* Recently a television story was recounting two teenage boys murdering their parents to obtain their inheritance, *“unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”*

These are the ones who are trapped in the web of Satan's lies, and the chains of his control, these are the unseen forces that control the masses of man. Unseen by the natural man for they have not the spiritual understanding to realize from whence it all comes. These are they who run our governments, our schools, the supposed houses of worship. Not knowing, that it is God, who is allowing these forces to control until all has

accomplished His purposes of reconciliation for man.

Yes, all are trapped in this prison house of death, except for the saints of God, who is allowing them this experience, in order that they may become the Kings and priests to help mankind back up the Highway of Holiness spoken of by the prophet Isaiah (ch. 35), during this coming millennium.

The eyes of His saints are open to the purposes of God and His plans for His wayward children in the world. We are reassured again by the words of the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans 8, *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”*

The majority of mankind is not aware where this evil influence comes from. Their eyes have been blinded. This is explained to us in the 4th chapter of 2 Corinthians from verse 1, as the Apostle Paul walks us through this understanding. As we read these scriptures, let us thank our heavenly Father that we are not like those who have no hope! *“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

Paul continues in his exhortation of the purpose. He says *“we have this treasure in earthen vessels”*. (v. 7) Brethren we were like the world, until this glorious light of truth shined into our lives because of the mercy of God! Otherwise we would be in this prison house of death with no hope!

I’m sure at some point in each of our lives we asked the question, “Why me Lord?” who am I that should deserve this honour? This honour of being co-workers with OUR Lord and saviour, to help guide and direct all of those of mankind, back to realize the wonderful mercy and love of our heavenly Father. To even judge angels who have gone astray, 1 Cor. 6. 2-3. What an honour! We who are nothing more than a lump of clay fashioned in the likeness of a man. And yet the creator said of His creation

that He loved us when we were yet sinners! We have this confirmation in Romans chapter 5 starting with verse 6, *“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteousness man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”*.

A beautiful picture of maintaining your faith even under adverse conditions is recorded for us in Acts the 16th chapter. Here the Apostle Paul and Silas were imprisoned for Paul calling an evil spirit out of a local woman who was being used as a profit for her masters. It was about midnight in the prison and Paul and Silas were praying and singing, all the while their feet were in the stocks. Suddenly there was an earthquake, where the foundations of the prison were shaken to the foundation. All the doors of the prison were opened, and all of the prisoners' chains were opened! What a beautiful time for an escape for all but the apostle Paul and Silas. When the jailer was awakened from his sleep, he realized that if the prisoners escaped, his life would be taken!

When our lives are controlled by our heavenly Father, we act not like the world, as we consider others and their welfare. The jailer was about to kill himself when Paul cried out with a loud voice, *“Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!”*

Brethren we should take note of this act of Paul, for what resulted later would bring another to the Lord Jesus Christ! The jailer spoke to Paul saying, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* Paul's answer to him was simple, but profound. Verse 31, and they said, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household!”* We have this opportunity in like manner, like the Apostle, to witness to those who are trapped in this prison house. We are beacons of light to this sin darkened world.

How often have you witnessed to those who reply, why that's too good to be true! But it is true. And if the Lord chooses to open their eyes of understanding, then they too will experience the joy we have, as footstep followers of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

We have full assurance these things will happen. We would like to close with thoughts that are contained in Revelation 21. We will select certain

verses to make this promise come alive for all those who are in this prison house and looking through the bars of this prison house of sadness. The Apostle starts off so eloquently with his encouragement. Verse one, *“I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.”* Here he is saying all evil will no longer be. Then he explains why, *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”* Then these beautiful words which we all cling to, *“And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and...there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away”*. The doors of this prison house will be swing wide open like the prison where Paul and Silas were held.

Today in the world according to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are over 10.2 million persons incarcerated over the face of the earth. And if this wasn't bad enough, according to the report 95% of the world's population have major health problems! Geneva, October 4, (2001) “One in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. Around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide!” (WHO) We pray for thy kingdom to come, thy will be done on this earth as it is done in heaven.

All would seem hopeless at this point, but the story is far from being told. In 1 Cor. 2. 9–10 we quote the words of our Creator, *“But just as it is written, “things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.” For to us God has revealed them through the spirit; for the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.”* In the apostle John's gospel, he says it all with these few words. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall (should) not perish, but have eternal life, For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might (should) be saved through Him”*.

KH

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray-

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free.
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

5. The Flying Roll

Of all the strange visions of Zechariah perhaps that of the flying roll in chapter 5 is the most bizarre. The prophet looked toward the sky and perceived a giant roll, of the kind used in his day for the writing of books, a roll of either parchment or dressed goatskin—probably the latter—but of a size no ordinary roll had ever attained. Thirty feet long and fifteen feet across, it swooped down almost like a modern dive-bomber; as it swooped it entered into the houses of the wicked, destroying them with the force of its impact and by reason of the writings it contained—this much is implied though not stated—compelling the occupants to stand and be judged for their misdeeds and separated into the penitent and the impenitent...the scene changed and now the prophet beheld a large earthenware measure, a store jar, inside which crouched a woman prevented from emerging by reason of a heavy cover of lead. Even as he looked, two flying figures, women with the wings of storks, swooped down from the sky, laid hold of the jar, and flew away carrying it, so the watching prophet was told, into the land of Shinar, where it was to be permanently established. Strange pictures, flickering across his consciousness and without any attempt by the revealing angel at explanation. What did it all mean?

The key to the chapter is the flying roll itself. The angel said of it, in chapter 5. 3 *“This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth”*. The word rendered “curse” means, not only an execration or an imprecation, which is the usage of “curse” in English, but also an oath, and in this sense is associated with the Divine promises and covenants. Thus Deut. 29. 12 *“That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day”*. The “oath” between Abraham and Eliezer in connection with the latter’s commission to find a bride for Isaac (Gen. 24. 41) is another instance. Quite often the word appears in connection with Moses as the intermediary. The fact that this “flying roll” is shown as meting out judgment upon the thieves and perjurers in verse 3, and destroying their houses in verse 4, is sufficient to indicate that the “curse” in this instance refers to the Divine oath, or promise, or covenant, and so the roll becomes the symbol of Divine righteousness or Divine Law by which all things are to be judged. This conclusion is confirmed by the dimensions given—

twenty cubits long by ten cubits wide. This was the size of the second compartment of the Mosaic Tabernacle, the Holy, where stood the golden lampstand and the altar of incense. It was also the size of the “Porch” of Solomon’s Temple—and in all probability of the rebuilt Temple of Zechariah’s day—the place from which the High Priest emerged to bless the people. Thus the flying roll is associated with Divine Law, Divine judgment and Divine blessing. The fact that it is effective, destroying evil, judging sin and creating a separation between the righteous and the wicked stamps it at once as having its application in the Millennial Age, the only Age when such things are completely true. So the setting of the chapter becomes evident; this is the Divine Law of the Millennial Age, going out to do the work of that Age to the elimination of evil and the establishment of everlasting righteousness.

Now the A.V. says of this flying roll *“every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it...it shall enter into the house of the thief, and...of him that sweareth falsely...and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof”* (ch. 5. 3-4). The determinant (determining) words here are “cut off” and “consume”; it is clear that the A.V. does not have the last word, for various translators offer one or other of two quite contradictory meanings in the case of “cut off”. Thus Leeser has “destroyed”, the LXX “punished”, and Margolis “swept away”, but Rotherham gives “let off”, Young “declared innocent”, R.V. “purged out” and Ferrar Fenton “reformed”. The reason for these variations is that *niqqah*, which means primarily to be pure, innocent, cleansed, free from blame, pardoned, etc., also has the meaning of being “cleaned out” as we would say, vacant, empty, hence can easily be rendered “to clear” in Exod. 34. 7 where God “will by no means *clear* the guilty”; in Num. 5. 19 “be thou *free* from this bitter water”; Exod. 21. 19 “shall he that smote him be *quit*”; Job 9. 28 “I know that thou wilt not hold me *innocent*”; Jud. 15. 3 “Now shall I be more *blameless* than the Philistines” and Psa. 19. 13 “then shall I be...*innocent* from the great transgression”. The cutting off of the sinner, by the flying roll, therefore, means, not his destruction, but the cutting off from his sin, his being made clean, pronounced innocent. Since this can only be achieved by his repentance and conversion, we have here a further insight into the basic principle of the coming Age. As the Wise man said (Prov. 16. 6) *“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by (in) the fear (reverence) of the LORD men depart from evil”*.

But it is different with the houses of the wicked. The same Divine standard which cleanses the sinner from his sin makes short work of the erection he has built. It enters into the houses and consumes them with the timber and stones thereof. That is a significant expression. In the Levitical Laws for dealing with leprosy in a house it was provided that the priest should “*break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place*” (Lev. 14. 45). Leprosy is a well known symbol of sin in Biblical allegory; there can be little doubt that the reference in Zechariah to the houses being consumed “with the timber and stones thereof” is intended to picture the obliteration of sin by that which is pictured by the flying roll.

These first four verses of Zech. 5, therefore, may well be taken to describe in allegorical language the operation of Divine Law in the Millennial Age, both in its aspect of judgment upon sin and that of conversion of the sinner. The two specific crimes mentioned, that of swearing falsely by God’s name, and that of stealing, relate to the third and eighth commandments of the Mosaic covenant. The roll was written on both sides—“*stealeth...this side*” and “*sweareth...that side*” (v. 3); on the assumption that in a symbolic sense the roll contained all ten commandments, five on each side, those mentioned would be the middle ones of their respective sides; thus the “stealing” and “swearing” might well be representative of the entire Law. By the impact of this Law the houses—works of men—are utterly destroyed, but by means of repentance and conversion the men themselves may be saved and pronounced clean and free from guilt. This is the work of the flying roll and the result is that repentant sinners are separated from their sin and made acceptable in the sight of God.

What happens to the dominion of evil? Does it remain, possibly to rise again and pollute the cleansed earth, or is it removed for ever? The answer to that question is shown in the second stage of the vision, the woman in the “ephah”.

The prophet beheld a strange sight. He saw what is described as an “ephah” with a woman sitting inside it. Strictly speaking, the ephah was a Hebrew measure of capacity used for liquids and loose materials such as grain, and was equal approximately to nine gallons. But no woman, no matter how diminutive, could possibly have squeezed into an ephah

measure. It is clear from Old Testament usage, however, that the word “ephah” was used as a term for measures of indeterminate value. Thus Deut. 25. 14-15 speaks of “divers *measures*” and “just *measure*”; Prov. 20. 10 “divers weights, and divers *measures*...are alike abomination to the LORD”; Micah 6. 10 “the scant *measure* that is abominable” are some of the instances where “ephah” is translated “measure”. It is correct therefore to say that Zechariah saw a “measure”, an earthenware jar, large enough to contain a woman. Such a measure would be the homer, equal to ten ephahs, and this implies a jar say two feet across and five feet high. This is adequate to the vision in which a woman is seen crouching inside.

Now the angel defined the woman—“*this*” he said “*is wickedness*” (v. 8) and he cast her down inside the measure and imprisoned her therein by sealing the open top of the jar with what is described as a “*talent of lead*” (v. 7). The talent was a measure of weight roughly equal to an English hundredweight. A piece of lead of that weight made to fit the top of a two foot jar would be some six inches thick—a very effective seal and not much chance of the woman ever getting out. It is to be noted here that the word rendered “talent” is *kikkar* which properly means a circle or sphere, hence anything circular such as a circular tract of country, a loaf of bread (made as a circular flat cake in those days) or a coin or piece of money. It is only therefore necessary to suppose that this *kikkar* or “talent” of lead was merely what the A.V. margin calls it, a “*weighty piece*” of circular form made to fit the top of the earthenware jar in which the woman was imprisoned.

This woman represents the evil and wickedness which had, as it were, been “driven underground” by the work of the flying roll. The earth and its inhabitants are cleansed from the taint, and all sin and evil, symbolised by the woman, has been concentrated in this earthenware jar and by reason of the enclosing cover unable ever again to escape to pollute the earth. Sin has been sealed up for ever. Now the prophet lifts up his eyes again and sees a new apparition in the sky (ch. 5 vv. 9-11), two flying figures, women having long wings like those of the stork, “*and the wind was in their wings*”. Swooping down upon the sealed up measure with its imprisoned occupant, they laid hold of it and soared up again into the sky, flying with strong strokes eastward until they were lost to the sight in the distance. “*Whither do these (they) bear the ephah (measure)?*” asked Zechariah of the revealing angel. “*To build it a house in the land of*

Shinar” was the reply “*and when that is ready they will set the measure there in its own place*”.* This is an evident picture of evil, finally and for ever overthrown, taken away out of the land and banished to “its own place” whence it can never return to trouble mankind. The stork-winged women are the Divine agents employed to execute this mission. The stork, although an unclean bird in the Levitical law owing to its habit of devouring serpents, frogs, lizards and the like, was given its Hebrew name *chasidah*, “the merciful one” from *chasid* meaning to be merciful or pious, on account of the reputed love and solicitude existing between parent bird and its young, which was famous among the Israelites. It thus became a symbol of love and devotion and of a benevolent protecting power watching over family life, for which reason storks were allowed to nest and breed in and about the homes of men without interference. In point of fact, our English word “stork” is from the Greek *storgos*, meaning natural or family affection; this word appears in the New Testament to render *storgos* several times, such as Rom. 1. 31 and 2 Tim. 3. 3 “without *natural affection*” and Rom. 12. 10 “*be kindly affectioned* one to another”. Thus these stork-like creatures I might well picture the powers of mercy and piety which in the next Age will have the effect of removing sin and evil far away. “*The wind was in their wings*” (v. 9) says the prophet; in all the prophetic Scriptures there is a strong association of thought between the blowing of terrestrial wind and the Holy Spirit in active operation in the earth—the same word *ruach* is used for both “wind” and “spirit” and the translators could with equal propriety have rendered “the Spirit was in their wings”. Thus it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the burden of the world’s evil is lifted up and away from the places of men and taken to a far land from which it can never return.

In the prophecy that land is said to be “the land of Shinar” (ch. 5. 11). Shinar as a territorial name had long since passed out of use in Zechariah’s day. Shinar was the ancient Sumir (Sumer in English), one of whose cities was Ur of the Chaldees in Abraham’s time, and another, Babylon. In Biblical history Sumer, or Shinar, figured in the story of the Tower of Babel and the founding of Babylon. Just as Jerusalem and Judea represented the land of God and his righteousness from the ideal standpoint, so Babylon and Shinar represented all that was anti-God and idolatrous, depraved and evil. The fiercest diatribes of the Hebrew prophets were directed against the evil city of Babylon and great was the acclamation when that city fell at length, never again to rise. If a place on this earth

had to be chosen to represent the home and repository of evil then that place would surely be Babylon. Fitting, then, the measure with its imprisoned woman was taken, in defiance of the laws of space and time, to the ancient, no longer existing, land of Shinar, to be permanently established there and never return.

The most fitting commentary on that final scene in the vision is a New Testament one. *“And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire...And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”* (Rev. 20. 14-15 Diaglott & A.V.). The lake of fire is, of course, metaphorical, the destruction, passing out of existence, which was suggested by the consuming fires of Jerusalem’s garbage dump, the Valley of Hinnom (Heb. *Gay-Hinnom*, Gk. *Ge-Henna*) outside the city. Just so will evil and all incorrigible, irrecoverable evildoers pass away and be no more when the combined mercy and judgment of the flying roll has completed its work. The way into the New Jerusalem, the city of light and life and love, is open to all who will enter, and the opportunity to be cleansed of all defiling influences in order that entry may be gained will be freely vouchsafed. *“The Spirit and the bride say, Come...and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”* (Rev. 22. 17). That is the mercy aspect of the flying roll. But it remains true that *“there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth...but only they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life”* (Rev. 21. 27 A.V. & RV), and the *“unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers”* and so on *“shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire...which is the second death”* (Rev. 21. 8). That is the judgment aspect.

So evil and all wickedness is buried at last in the city of the dead, established in the land of Shinar, “in its own place”. It is a remarkable fact that Isaiah’s magnificent prediction of the doom of Babylon has remained true through the ages when other ancient cities have been rebuilt and restored to human habitation. *“Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there... but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful (howling) creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.”* (Isa. 13. 19-21). To this day the site of that ancient city is a waste of broken brickwork and drifting sand, shunned by men and

infested with wild animals. The place where once stood the proud Tower whose top was to reach unto heaven is now a reed-grown swamp, every vestige of that one time magnificent edifice gone save a few rows of mouldering bricks. There, in that desolation, Zechariah saw the earthen-ware jar, with its captive symbol of evil, carried to share the oblivion which has fallen upon that place. Here is the realisation of the promise made to the Kingly Priest in the vision of chapter 3 “*I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day*”. (v. 9) And it is removed to a place from which it can never return. When Zechariah was told that ephah was to be established or set in its own place he must have thought of the famous Temple of Marduk in Babylon, standing in all its glory alongside the great Tower which Genesis calls the Tower of Babel. There, in that centre of world idolatry, devoted to the service of all the false gods of mythology, he must have pictured final resting place of the ephah. There it would be set “*upon its own base*” in the very centre of the land of Shinar and in its principal shrine. But today all that is left of that proud Temple lies buried beneath sixty feet of alluvial soil and sand, deposited by the annual floods of the River Euphrates through the centuries. That is where Zechariah’s vivid allegory leaves all that is evil and alien to God—buried far underground whence it can never emerge to trouble man again.

To be continued.

AOH



JESUS is the REWARDER.

He pays us wages according to our service, good or bad. JESUS says... The one who loves Me, cheerfully gives of time, talent, and self to Me. Visit Me in prison or in nursing homes, clothe Me, feed Me, touch My diseased body or tormented mind with healing, give Me a home.

As you serve others you will find that I have taken a towel and water to wash your tired feet...

“Behold! I am coming speedily; and my REWARD is with me, to give to each one as his work is.”

Revelation 22. 12 (Diaglott)

At The Name of Jesus
Sarah Hornsby

REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD

A Word on Eph. 1. 7

There is at least one strand of thought running through these first verses of Ephesians which no enthusiastic student of the prison epistles can claim to be a new exclusive feature of Truth. Although Paul's detention under arrest had afforded him more time to think and reflect, his words explanatory of redemption through the precious blood reveal but little expansion or development over the thoughts of his earlier days. From his very earliest missionary days he taught the great theme orally and in his earliest writings it is also to be found. Redemption, based on the death and resurrection of his beloved Lord, was the scarlet strand which he wove into and out of every theme, for indeed to him it was always the prime essential foundation for everything else that had followed. Moreover, when he wanted to prove the verity of God's abounding love—the fountain of all grace—he does so by stating that the death of Jesus was its full and final proof (Rom. 5. 8).

Here, now, among these towering mountain-peaks of truth, he brings it in again, and says, "In whom (the Beloved) we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace..." (RV) That is great doctrine; worthy to rank with any feature of Divine Truth. To say the least, this sacred theme provides a connecting link between those earlier days of intensive missionary activity, when unceasing service crowded out opportunity to ponder and reflect, and the later restricted days when, though the body was in chains, the mind was free to soar aloft to greater heights, and range abroad over the fields of time from pre-creation days to the coming sinless days when God will be all-in-all, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. This interlinking truth shows the higher flights of those prison days were not the statements of exclusively new truths, except in the same sense that a fully blooming rose is a new flower. The delicacy of its tints, the perfection of its form, the richness of its texture, and the fragrance of its perfume may all appear to adorn the well-kept rosary in a single summer's day, but its winsome charm and beauty had not been spun overnight by fairy fingers out of early morning dews. Nature's mysterious and subtle forces had been working days and weeks in readiness for the "opening day."

So with Paul's greater thoughts. He had carried them treasured up in his

retentive mind, and from time to time when circumstances allowed, he brought to view the green immature buds of thought, to rouse or comfort fainting hearts. Such developed thoughts were not appropriate for “babes in Christ” and many “babes” came to birth as consequence of the early missionary travail. All such babes needed “milk” and other lighter foods. Among these foods were the facts concerning the death of the Lord and His resurrection from the dead. The story of a Saviour who died to save the people from their sin was an easier thought for the newly-stricken conscience to grasp than the amazing facts of an election predetermined before the world began. It was a simpler theme to assure the new-fledged believer that Jesus died “for” him, than to ask him to consider himself dead with Christ, and baptised into His death.

While, then Paul’s restless feet were hurrying back and forth over land and sea, over mountain and plain, seeking hungering souls which waited for the light, not only had he insufficient time to sit and ponder and develop the full outlines of the Truth committed to his care, but to have done so would have deprived thousands of waiting souls the assistance for which they called. Both among Jews and Gentiles were many benighted individuals for whom life held no ray of light. To live day in, day out, a hopeless Godless existence—“without God and without hope in the world”—was the common lot of myriads of frustrated souls, fated otherwise to pass from the cradle to the grave without aim or purpose in the rounds of life, of no higher outlook than that of mere brute beasts. Paul knew all this. His heart was deeply touched with the deep tides of sorrow which surged within and around the hearts of the vast groaning creation of his day.

He also knew he held the secret or the world’s unceasing need in his own soul. He knew what Jesus of Nazareth had done for him. He knew also what Jesus could do for all who would hear the message which he carried from town to town and land to land. Knowledge such as this gave impetus to his feet, and urgency to his task, enabling him to scorn pain or difficulty, or any other of a thousand things with which Satan sought to block his path.

Paul had himself felt the deep soul-need. He once knew the hunger which naught could satisfy. He had known the pain-pangs of a bruised heart, which in its search after higher things had tried to soar aloft, only to fall

crashing to a stony earth. He could remember that it had been his privilege to drink deep of his nation's philosophy at the feet of one of Israel's really great sons, and find its choicest waters turn to wormwood in his soul. He could not forget that his ardent nature had searched the deepest mines of his own and of former days, to find the secret way to life, but had found every turn did no more than mock him in his quest. In spite of his scholarly genius and accomplishments, his deeper self had ever remained unilluminated and unsatisfied. No crumb of satisfaction had ever reached the vital depths of his famished soul till he looked on the resplendent glory on the Damascus way. There, for the first time in his adventurous career he tasted the first real morsel that satisfied. There, the God of his fathers—the God he had sought with all the passion of his white-hot heart, began to reveal His Son to his astonished gaze. It broke upon his arrested mind that the Son of God loved him, and had given Himself up for him (Gal. 2. 20). And when others made boast of this or that, this greatly satisfied heart made boast of one thing alone "...far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6. 14 RV). And this, let us not forget, was the fervent statement of his pre-prison days.

Thus the memories of his own famished soul, and of the satisfaction that now filled his life in every part, sent his travel-stained feet hurrying over hill and plain, over land and sea, to take to other fainting souls the same cup of life from which his own lips had drunk their fill. Men waited in black darkness for the story of Jesus' death—of redemption through His blood—and of reconciliation to a God of Love—what wonder then that Paul slaved beyond his strength, to tell that simpler phase of the great truth committed to his charge, leaving the deeper fuller aspects to later days, when he himself had time under the leading of the spirit of truth to trace those deeper things in more detail, and his converts and brothers had grown to greater stature in Christ, and were thus able to understand that a kindly Providence shaped all his path, and gave to him and through him all that was best for every time of need—milk for the infant days, meat for the fuller grown.

Selected

A Christian is happier in a prison cell with Christ than in a palace without him.

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook
Harvest Activities

SOON SHALL RESTITUTION GLORY—A HYMN

SOON shall restitution glory
Bring to earth a blessed rest;
And the poor, and faint, and weary
Shall be lifted up and blest.

Just beyond the coming trouble
See the reigning Prince of Peace!
Lo! God's kingdom now is coming,
And oppression soon must cease.

Sing! O sing! ye heirs of glory,
Shout the tidings as you go!
Publish wide redemption's story—
All, its healing balm should know.

Tell how Eden's bloom and beauty
Once again shall be restored,
Making all man's wide dominion
As the garden of the Lord.

Tell how Satan's dark dominion
Shall at once be overthrown,
And from out death's gloomy
prison,

All earth's loved ones soon shall
come.

O yes, sing, ye heirs of glory,
Shout your triumph far and near,
Let the notes of praise and singing
Sweetly fall on sorrow's ear.

This hymn sometimes in 7 verses and with a chorus was written over a century ago now. It appears in two hymnbooks now passed out of common use in the U.K. called 'Winnowed Hymns' and 'Jubilee Harp'. Its not known how close now to the original author's words these words will have remained but the sentiments can still be appreciated.

Acts 3. 20-21 He shall send Jesus Christ, ...whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Isaiah 40. 31 They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Daniel 12. 1 Michael (shall) stand up, the great prince:...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered.

Isaiah 9. 6-7 Unto us a child is born,...and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God,...The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and

peace there shall be no end,...and upon his kingdom,...and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever and ever.

Matthew 6. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Revelation 11. 15 The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever.

Revelation 22. 2 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.

Genesis 1. 28 God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Ezekiel 36. 35-36 They shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.

Isaiah 51. 3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Revelation 20. 2 He laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.

Isaiah 42. 6-7 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness,...and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Isaiah 61. 1 The LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

Romans 8. 16-17 The Spirit...beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if...we suffer with him,...we may be also glorified together.

John 5. 28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

Psalms 47. 1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Part 11

The Hindrance of Selfishness Must be Eliminated

God's power is applied, when prayed for through Jesus the Victor, to transform our lives, that we may be used successfully in bringing blessings upon others by turning them to God's ways. With the driving power of love in our hearts we shall never pray for ourselves with any other motive than that of being prepared more perfectly for the Master's use. For when we pray otherwise we are selfish, and our prayers will not then be heard. Jesus is our example in this respect; and we know that his prayers were not for himself directly, but on behalf of his followers, and ultimately on behalf of the world. (John 17. 9-23) It is manifest that selfishness is one of the hindrances to effective prayer; it is possible that the accusation of James will sometimes apply to us: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your (own desires) lusts." (James 4. 3) And yet how often do men pray with no other motive than this! Selfishness is, of course, the very opposite to sacrifice which is the secret of acceptable prayer, for sacrifice is self-denial. (Matthew 16. 24)

Our Lord desires that we shall rise to our wonderful opportunities in the matter of prayer. The privilege is too precious to waste in asking for temporal things for our own use, such as food, drink, clothing. Our Master did not send us into the world to spend our time asking for things which the heathen implore of their idol gods (Luke 12. 29-30); but as he himself was sent into the world to perform a definite work for his Father, and did not question that he would be provided with every human necessity while thus engaged, so he sends us into the world to continue that work in his name till it be accomplished; and we have not to request the Father for things which he has already pledged himself to provide. A careful reading of the sixth chapter of Matthew's Gospel will show that our Master desires us to direct our exclusive powers of prayer to those things pertaining to the Kingdom and its righteousness. We have his word for it that all other things shall be added without special pleading.

The Hindrance Interposed by Satan Cannot Endure

We may pray from a pure heart with unselfish motive, and according to God's will, and yet at times it seems that our heavenly Father does not

hear. Why is this? Because prayer is a spirit force; and Satan is a spirit being, able, apparently, to retard the powers which prayer sets in motion.

But the adversary cannot obstruct the spiritual force of prayer indefinitely, for if the heart of the one who prays is in the right condition, and if he pray in the name of Christ according to the will of God, Satan must give way ultimately. Thus Jesus gave a parable to illustrate the necessity for persistency in prayer until the petition be granted. In Luke 18. 1-8 he spoke a parable to this end, or to impress this lesson, that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." The parable reveals a contest between the people of God and the adversary. The Lord's children have no power in themselves to overcome Satan; they therefore call upon their God to aid them.

Jesus used three persons in his parable, namely, a judge, a widow, and an adversary. These three represent: God, the children of God, and Satan. For the purpose of driving home the lesson, Jesus likened God to an unjust judge who would not move to avenge the helpless widow, until compelled for very weariness at her importuning. But God is not unjust and indifferent. On the contrary he will avenge his own elect, who cry unto him day and night, speedily. Why, then, should it be required that we persist in prayer when we know that our heavenly Father does not need to be compelled to avenge us against our adversary? Because he suffers Satan's oppressions for a wise purpose; and he must have the continual prayers of his elect that Satan may be defeated.

There is much truth in the words of the *hymn: "Restraining prayer, we cease to fight; prayer keeps the Christian's armour bright; and Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." For although the child of God may be weak physically, he is strong spiritually when he prays in faith out of a pure and honest heart, according to God's will, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 12. 9-10) He is then putting into operation spiritual forces which in due time will hurl the cruel deceiver from his spiritual control of mankind. Satan and his evil demon-followers know this, and tremble. (Matt. 8. 29; Acts 16. 18; James 2. 19) We remind ourselves that prayer is in itself one of the factors in the Lord's orderly Plan of Salvation. Spiritual forces are far stronger than physical forces; and the prayer of a spirit begotten saint is the strongest of all spiritual forces, because backed by every power of the Almighty. The will of the Lord of heaven and earth must be realized (for what

power is there to thwart Him?); and acceptable prayer is the expression of His will.

The words of the parable, “bear long with them,” do not apply to the elect whom God will avenge speedily, but to the adversary with whom he is longsuffering. The inference is clear that if the people of God fainted, the great adversary would gain the day and retain his position of power. Had the widow (who could do nothing for herself, being helpless) fainted in her pleadings her adversary would have retained his oppressive power, because the judge was unjust and would not see justice done until compelled for the sake of personal peace. With God the motive is entirely different. His throne is founded on justice. (Psa. 89. 14 margin) He requires our continual prayers to enable him to establish justice upon the earth; and he is bearing long with the adversary until every feature of his gracious Plan of Salvation is accomplished. (Rom. 9. 22-23)

Next time—Prayer a Powerful Spiritual Force

ME

WHAT various hindrances we meet
In coming to the mercy-seat!
Yet who, that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?

Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw;
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love;
Brings every blessing from above.

** Last verse page 183*

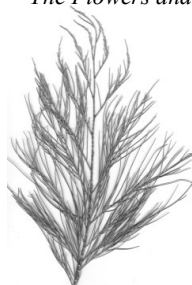
HEATH *Tamarix articulata* (Tamaricaceae)

“Cursed be the man that trusteth in man...for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness...” (Jer. 17. 5-6)

Jeremiah probably had in mind the tamarisk, a stunted desert bush, or possibly the juniper, which is common desert plant.



The Flowers and Fruits of the Bible
John Chancellor



THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Extracts from the Bible Study Monthly on a New Testament book—Part 5

Camphire provided the women of the land with a delicate perfume; from the leaves they made a dye to ornament their finger-nails. So with the adornment of **1 Peter 3. 4** “*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*” Nov Dec '79

1 Peter 3. 12 *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

Jesus called into requisition the power of the Lord of heaven and earth by means of prayer...The Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, are the first to escape the condemnation... These hear the word of reconciliation, and in response to the invitation: “My son, give me thine heart,” they take away their (unwitting) allegiance to the god of this world, Satan, and give their heart-loyalty to the heavenly Father (Prov. 23. 26; Col. 1. 8-13). God is then able to use them to accomplish further features of his purposes, and to send his operative power through the medium of their prayers. (Col. 4. 3; 1 Thess. 3. 10; **1 Pet. 3. 12**; Phil. 1. 19) ME

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

By the grace of God, so many of His paths are paths of mercy (Psalm 25.10 to such as keep his covenant). Long ago, the Father of Mercies made provision for our need. He sent down from heaven a Saviour, who, by His death, can save His people from their sins. Himself without sin, yet in His compassionate love for men, became Himself the bearer of their sins. He gave Himself, the “just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (**1 Pet. 3. 18**). He reconciled us by His death; He now lives to save us by His living, loving care (Rom. 5. 10.) The path of mercy, from our first feeble Christian days, till now, is hedged about by His precious blood. It is a scarlet trail, for precious blood made possible our first faltering step in Grace, and precious blood has made safe our every further step. Aug '40

Jesus came to reconcile men to God. There was no possibility of reconciliation before He came, for there was no basis upon which true reconciliation could be made. Man, imperfect, fallen, sinful, could not so much as stand in the presence of One who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, so the “way into the Holiest of all was not made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” (Heb. 9. 8). Jesus came to open that way. It involved his own death, a willing sacrifice, the “*just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*” (**1 Pet. 3. 18**), but that death did open the way for all of earth’s millions, “whosoever will”, to enter, in due time, into the eternal inheritance God has prepared for them (Matt. 25. 34). The coming of Christ and the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ was for all men, and upon the day that He ascended triumphantly on high, having led captivity captive (Eph. 4. 8), He began to set in motion the mighty forces which are destined to have spread their energy over the long span of three thousand years before they will have completed the achievement of the Divine purpose, the reconciliation to God of all who will, and the subjection of all things to Christ, that at his Name shall every knee bow, whether of things in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth (Phil.2. 10) *Nov Dec ‘81*

The elementary statement that Christ since his ascension is seated at the right hand of God is a figure of speech which provides a convenient visual image to the mind but does no more than sketch a very broad outline of the basic truth involved. No instructed Christian nowadays believes that God exists in the form of a venerable aged king seated upon a great throne set somewhere in the midst of the stellar heavens, with the Lord Christ eternally passive upon a somewhat lesser throne beside him. It may be a closer approach to the reality to picture him as a radiantly glorious being “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto,” but even so we cannot with our human minds hope to formulate a picture which comes anywhere near the truth. The nature of the Divine Creator remains for us an impenetrable mystery. And to some extent the Person of Christ must share that mystery. We should no longer think of him in the form of the Man who was crucified, rather as the “Lord...that Spirit” (2 Cor. 3. 17. **1 Pet. 3. 18** NEB, RSV) partaker of the Divine glory. *Jan Feb ‘81*

“So....is the resurrection of the dead”.... “It is sown a natural (physical, terrestrial) body; it is raised a spiritual (celestial) body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”. The Greek is more forceful; “If there

is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15. 42-44). And here he crowns his argument with a fact which cannot be gainsaid. “And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15. 45 A.V. & Diaglott) (after his resurrection; as in **1 Pet. 3.18** RSV). “Christ...being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit”. Resurrection to another world involves being “clothed upon” to use Paul’s words in 2. Cor. 5. 2 with a new and fundamentally different body. We cannot take the old one with us into that other world. Flesh and blood cannot inherit that world and that kingdom. *Jan Feb ‘89*

The essential nature of the resurrection of the Lord’s followers, his Church, is that like him (**1 Pet. 3.18**) they meet their death in the flesh, on this earth, and awaken in the resurrection in the spirit, in the celestial world, and find themselves with the Lord, and this is the same experience whether the particular believer is one who died at the beginning of the Age or is still living at the time of the Lord’s Advent at its end. *Jan Feb ‘89*

“...put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which he also went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient....in the days of Noah” (1 Pet. 3. 18-20).

When it is realised, that the “spirits in prison” are not dead human beings... An understanding of Genesis 6 and the nature of events at the time of the Flood makes it clear that these spirits are the rebellious angels who apostasised from their lawful estate and assumed human form to live on the earth as men, and were condemned, after Divine judgment had been passed on them, to remain in the imprisoned state, neither on earth nor in heaven, which St. Peter describes in 2 Pet. 2. 4. as “*tartarus*” (*hell* in the A.V.) to await final judgment and sentence. “*Tartarus*”, its only occurrence in the Bible, is not hell or Hades. It is the term employed in Greek mythology to describe the prison of the Titans, semi-gods who rebelled against the chief gods and were overthrown....It is a condition of existence rather than a place and is probably synonymous with the “abyss” or “bottomless pit” of Revelation and the “deep” of Luke 8. 31. To the Bible student it is obvious that the myth of the Titans is a traditional reminiscence of the historical event recorded in Genesis 6, especially so in that these Titans were said to have been the offspring of Uranus the heaven-god and Gea the earth goddess, just as the *nephilim* of Gen. 6

were the offspring of the celestial sons of God and the terrestrial daughters of men.

It may be taken then that Peter is saying in this text that after his death Christ preached to the imprisoned fallen angels. Where and in what manner did He do this?

It has often been suggested that this “preaching” was by force of example, that the imprisoned spirits, witnessing our Lord’s loyalty to the Father while on earth, observing his devoted life and unresisting death, and his subsequent exaltation to the highest pinnacle of celestial glory at the right hand of God, were thereby recipients of a powerful sermon in action. It is thought that thereby at least some of them might have been influenced to repentance and conversion and therefore reconciliation with God. Col. 1. 20 is definite that Christ will reconcile some apostates from the celestial world in addition to men upon earth. There is therefore nothing unreasonable in this suggestion, unless it be the fact that Peter presents the preaching as being after our Lord’s death whereas the “sermon in action” would have been made largely during his life on earth before his death.

There is one factor in the text which seems to require an alternative explanation. The A.V. says He “went and preached”. The Greek is *poreutheis* which is the aorist* form of the verb *poreuomai*, to go or to pass from one place to another. It implies that Christ definitely went to the imprisoned spirits for the purpose of this preaching. The A.V. rendering of the text is not so accurate as it ought to have been; “*quickened by the spirit, by which*” should be “*in the spirit, in which*”; it is so rendered by every reputable translation aside from the A.V. Perhaps the N.E.B. has it best “*in the body he was put to death; in the spirit he was brought to life. And in the spirit he went and made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits*”. The Greek word *en* properly means “in” but not “by means of”. For the more scrupulous the literal rendering of the Greek text is “*....being put to death flesh but being made alive spirit, in which also to the spirits in prison having gone, he preached*”.

Our Lord was in the grave three days. On the third day He rose from the dead. It was only then that He was “made alive spirit”. Only then did He resume his former spiritual glory and re-enter the world He left at the commencement of his humanity. Only after that time, the time of his

resurrection, could the statement in this text be true. It is at least possible that after his resurrection, perhaps after He left his disciples and ascended to the Father, our Lord did in fact go to the spirits in prison and proclaim his evangel to them. Perhaps at that point they did for the first time have the door of salvation through repentance opened.

The judgment of both men and angels is to take place simultaneously in the day of the Church's triumph (1 Cor. 6. 1-3). Maybe this present Age and the future Messianic Age constitute a period in which not only men, but angels, have the grace of God offered to them by his messenger, and can, if they will, turn from sin to serve the living God. *Mar Apr '78*

The identity of the "spirits in prison" is easily established. Peter himself refers to them again in his second epistle; "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (Gk. Tartarus) "and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment..." (2 Pet. 2. 4) and so does Jude "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). (For full explanation of this subject see BSM Mar/Apr 1989 article "The Nephilim". Ed.)

Jesus died on Friday; He was raised from the dead on Sunday. It was then that He re-entered the celestial world from which He had originally come. But not until another forty days had elapsed did He return to his Father, at the Ascension. In the meantime He appeared from time to time to his disciples, not the man Jesus of Nazareth they had known, but now materialising in human form on each occasion in similar fashion to the angelic appearances recorded in the Old Testament. But all those recorded appearances could not have aggregated more than twenty-four hours. Where was He for the rest of the time? Does Peter's remark supply a partial answer to that?

The answer lies...in the foundation principles of the Divine Plan. God will "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2. 4). "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" (Ezek. 33. 11). This is the Lord's attitude and desire. and to accomplish this intention He

has appointed the coming Millennial Age...under the supervision of Christ and his Church.... *Jan Feb '90*

The history of witchcraft and spiritism (spiritualism) through the ages since has been largely the history of these rebellious spirits endeavouring to break through the restraints that have bound them, and continue their evil ways. *Sept Oct '78 The Gadarene Swine*

1 Peter 3. 21 *The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*

It is because the surviving records of those far-off days are so scanty that we are not able completely to trace this aspect of the doctrine of baptism back to its probable origin...The Apostle Paul, whose knowledge of ancient lore was almost certainly far more profound than we today can easily realise, referred to something of this when he wrote in 1 Cor. 10. 2 of Israel, passing through the Red Sea, being “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”. That was not a baptism of cleansing; it was a baptism of separation, of dedication to the purposes of God that they might be a chosen people, a Royal Priesthood, ultimately to become an instrument in God’s hand for the reconciliation of fallen man to himself and the accomplishment of his purposes with them. To accomplish that end they must of necessity pass through the waters that separate between fallen man in a sinful world and the eternal life that can only be achieved in God’s world.

Peter must have seen something of that when he likened Christian baptism to the historical incident of the Flood. In the days of the Ark, he says, a few were saved by water—were carried through the water and saved when all others perished—“*The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*”. (1 Pet. 3. 21). He meant something very much akin to Paul’s words about Israel’s baptism in the Red Sea. Noah and his family were forever separated from an evil world, where sin reigned, by the waters of the Deluge, and they came forth into a new world which to them was a world of new and Divine life, a world where the Spirit of God could have full scope for the exercise of beneficent power and the righteous live according to the dictates of their own pious hearts with none to make them afraid. The fact that in after days the world relapsed again into evil does not spoil the picture of the new,

renovated world into which Noah and his family entered when they emerged from the Ark, nor of the fact that we who by baptism are separated just as surely from a doomed and dying world come forth to a new order of things. *July Aug '84*

“Far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” (Eph. 4. 10). This is a more profound and comprehensive truth than the simple and matter-of-fact statement in **1 Pet. 3. 22** “*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him*” but both texts refer to the same thing. The words of Peter are capable of interpretation in terms of space and time and open up to view a picture of Christ sharing the glory of the Father in heaven, the while He is waiting for the “due time” in human history when He is to return to earth again, and that is about the easiest manner in which human beings can grasp the great truth. *Jan Feb '81*



Imprisonment as a punishment for criminal behaviour is never referred to in the Pentateuch (Mosaic law).



However by the days of the kings this had changed. “The princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe. For they had made that the prison. When Jeremiah entered the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days, then Zedekiah...sent and took him out. The king asked him secretly in his house, and said, “Is there any word from the LORD?” ... Jeremiah said, “There is.” Then he said, “You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon!” Moreover Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What offence have I committed against you, against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison? Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land’? Therefore please hear now, O my lord the king. Please, let my petition be accepted before you, and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan.” (Jeremiah 37. 15-20 NKJV)

A prisoner would be bound in chains of bronze or of iron. Sometimes his feet would be placed in stocks. (Jer. 40. 1; Judges 16. 21; Job 13. 27; Jer. 20. 2)

Jesus told his followers that many would find themselves in prisons as it says in Luke 21. 12 (NKJV), “they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake.”

KING HEZEKIAH

2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 29-32 & Isaiah 36-39.

All references NIV unless specified

He was one of the most remarkable and faithful kings. 2 Chron. 29. 1-2 Of all of the kings of Judah surely he was the finest and most devout. After King Solomon Israel had split into two: Israel with 10 tribes with Samaria as its capital, then Judah and Benjamin as the Kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital. Jeroboam was the first king of Israel and King Hoshea the last. Rehoboam was the first king of Judah and King Zedekiah the last. All other kings of Israel completely turned against God. Altogether Judah was ruled by 20 kings, including Hezekiah. In the comparative period King Hoshea ruled Israel nine years and he was a bad king who turned against God.

2 Kings 18. 1-4 (KJV) details, “In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name also was Abi (Abijah), the daughter of Zachariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David...did.”

Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz, was the one of the worst kings. 2 Chron. 28. 22-25 says “In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD. He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, ‘Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me.’ But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel. Ahaz gathered together the furnishings from the temple of God and cut them in pieces. He shut the doors of the LORD’s temple and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem. In every town in Judah he built high places to burn sacrifices to other gods and aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of his ancestors.” Idol worship is against the commandments in Exodus 20. 4-5. Charles Russell and other expositors write that the secret to Hezekiah’s faithfulness was Abi, his godly mother. See Isa 8. 3

How Hezekiah became a faithful king

One example of his faithfulness relates to what was called ‘Nehushtan’. Num. 21. 4-9 says of the time of Moses “They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew

impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.” Nehustan was that snake that was made.

2 Kings 18. 4-7 (KJV) Hezekiah “removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God...; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah,... For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.” This shows how King Hezekiah completely obeyed God’s commandments and how he was led by God in the spirit.

It was just out of fear that the people in the wilderness had looked at the bronze snake with a desire to preserve their lives. Once the trouble had gone they went back to the same ways worse than ever. But real fear of God is to repent of sin and obey his commandments and to stay in his love. Jesus referred to this event when he made the famous statement in John 3. 14-16 (NKJV) “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should...have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting (eternal) life.”

The beginning of Hezekiah’s reign

Hezekiah began by commanding the destruction of idols and he called together the priests and Levites and instructed them to sanctify themselves and set upon the task of cleaning out the house of the Lord, the Temple.

He made arrangements to celebrate the Passover, which they had not followed for very long time. All the people were invited to realise their mistake, to repent, come back to God and obey his commandments. 2 Chron. 30. 1 “Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD.”

What a gospel message to send to them to repent and turn their heart towards God. “Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.” (2 Chron. 30. 8-9 NKJV).

However, many rejected him and only a few turned their hearts to God. 2 Chron. 30. 10-11 (NKJV) says “the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them. Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.” But “the Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests praised the LORD every day with resounding instruments dedicated to the LORD” (2 Chron. 30. 21). So due to his grace he celebrated the Passover in the next month following Nissan, Iyar, since he followed God’s commandments strictly. He saw their priests and Levites were unclean so took the decision to celebrate in a pure way and God blessed it as it says “since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 30. 26).

The attack from King Sennacherib of Assyria

Because “the LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.”(2 Kings 18. 7 NKJV) Hezekiah had taken a stand for righteousness. He would not live in subjection to pagans or give in to their threats and intimidation. He rebelled by not paying their taxes and therefore during his 14th year Sennacherib entered Judah and started to attack. Sennacherib was the son

of King Sargon II, who destroyed the kingdom of Israel and had become the successor of King Shalmaneser who captured Israel's last king, Hoshea, during the 6th year of Hezekiah's reign.

When Hezekiah saw the attack coming on Judah the first thing he did was to save Jerusalem. *The Gihon Spring was Jerusalem's main water source but it was outside of the city walls. Hezekiah knew that when the Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem, the location of the spring would be disastrous—it would provide the besieging Assyrian army with water, while cutting off most of the water supply for those within Jerusalem's walls. So he made the water to flow inside the city. "He consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city...They gathered a large group of people who blocked all the springs and the stream. 'Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?' they said". Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it. He built another wall outside that one and reinforced the terraces of the City of David. He also made large numbers of weapons and shields. He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.' And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said."

The same attack will be upon those, especially in the last days, who rebel against Satan and obey God's word. It is a good example to be aware and plan to be ready to prevent such an attack. Our protective wall is the Holy Spirit which he promised all who abide in his words. Eph. 6. 10-17 says, "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that

*Bible researchers say this is the pool Jesus named in John 9.7 when He healed the blind man he was told "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam").

comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” It is important to remember at all times our enemies are limited, but our God is unlimited.

Making peace with Assyria (2 Kings 18. 13-16)

However, after this Hezekiah sent a message to King Sennacherib at Lachish apologising for the rebellion and offering to pay whatever tax and tribute he required. The gold and silver that the Sennacherib insisted upon was paid for by emptying Hezekiah's treasuries as well as the Temple. He even had to cut the gold from the Temple doors to make the payment.

This goes to show that even the godliest of men have seasons of stumbling. It was because the king of Assyria had captured most Israelites deporting them to Assyria as well as the towns of the Medes. (2 Kings 18. 11-12) That happened because they had not obeyed the Lord but had violated his covenant, all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, as they neither listened to the commands nor carried them out. Fortunately, Hezekiah's weakness was not permanent, because of his relationship with the Lord. The scriptures clearly explain never to compromise with Satan and make peace with him but rather surrender to God because the Lord within is greater than the one in the world, who is trying to make us afraid. James 4. 7 says “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” And 1 John 4. 4 “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5. 8)

Later Hezekiah tried to compromise by surrendering to Sennacherib. The Assyrians started to try Hezekiah's belief in God through his ministers. (Isaiah 36. 11 & 2 Kings 18. 26...) “Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah (Hezekiah's palace administrator), and Shebna (Hezekiah's secretary) and Joah said to the field commander, ‘Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.’” This was because they were ashamed of the way the Assyrian could speak to them and make fun of Hezekiah and God. But Sennacherib's commander replied “Was it only to your

master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall—who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine?” Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, ‘The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ “Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death! Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand?” (2 Kings 18. 26-34)

Compromising with Satan and his devices to make peace started to break the confidence of the people till they would have become slaves. They even began to curse the real God. The adversary has been doing this from creation for about 6,000 years and it is still happening in the whole world now. The truth is people are slaves through fear. God’s name has been questioned in various forms like asking ‘Where is your God?’ or ‘Why does God let this happen?’ Hezekiah soon realized his error and he repented and turned back to God.

Jerusalem’s deliverance

“When...Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. He sent Eliakim,...Shebna...and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah.... They told him,...Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the moment of birth and there is no strength to deliver them.” (2 Kings 19. 1-3) Then Isaiah foretold the death of the king of Assyria. “The LORD says, ‘He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city....I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David.’” (2 Kings 19. 32-34) That night with an invisible scimitar

the angel of the Lord cut down 185,000 dead. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10. 31 KJV). Sennacherib turned in despair and when he got home, his own sons slew him (2 Kings 19. 37) The lesson is that the new creature should not to be scared or lose faith, God will destroy the enemy, even as just one angel cut down an army of 185,000. (2 Kings 19. 35-36)

Extra 15 years reign

See how God forgave Hezekiah’s mistake, and saved him from danger and blessed him. However he still became sick unto death and was told by Isaiah to organise his household affairs. But God again showed His divine grace and changed His mind after Hezekiah’s humble prayer and guaranteed him an extra 15 years of life.

The lesson here is to understand how important it is to lead and be organised in the responsibility of looking after our earthly and spiritual family. How many have any assurance they are going to be alive tomorrow? The biggest destiny of sin is death and all our life is uncertainty. No one can guarantee long life but here God promised Hezekiah 15 more years.

Envoys from Babylon

At that time Marduk-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift because he had heard of his illness and recovery. Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine olive oil—his entire armoury and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them. Isaiah asked Hezekiah about these distant visitors. Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD Almighty: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

After the miracle and blessings God tested him to know what was in his heart. Hezekiah’s heart was proud so the Lord’s wrath was on him and on all Judah. (2 Chron. 32. 25-31) Lucifer, Satan, desired to “ascend above

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the heights of the clouds” and to “be like the most High...yet (he) shalt be brought down to hell.” (Isa. 14. 14-15) God will preserve a people who will stay humble in His presence and will save a soul that will call upon Him. (Rom. 10. 13) “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.” (Prov. 16. 5 KJV)

All in all, despite an idolatrous father, Hezekiah was a good king of faith. He reformed the nation and cleansed the Temple. Therefore God was with him and gave him victories like the one over Sennacherib. Moments of doubt and pride did lead to difficulties for him and the nation.

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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*‘Neither
shall they
learn war
any more’
Isaiah 2. 4*

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4. 15 NRSV).

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"...neither shall they learn war any more" Isa. 2. 4

The guns fell quiet and firing ceased on all fronts on 11 November 1918. Pears Cyclopaedia records 'great jubilation' that World War 1 had come to a close. According to Simon Jenkins there were 700,000 British military deaths which was 1 in 12 of all mobilised males and a quarter of the officers. It is reckoned that there were 10 million deaths on all sides. The war contributed to the spread of the influenza pandemic which accounted for the deaths of about 75 million worldwide. The financial cost was high and also the national debt ballooned from £40m to £360m. H.G. Wells called it "The war that will end war". This was not to be so.

After the Armistice the League of Nations was formed on 10 January 1920 with the object of promoting international peace and security. At its height 53 nations were part of the organisation. Such was the desire for peace among the British populace that there was the 'peace ballot' in 1935 'in support of the weak-kneed League of Nations and a prohibition on world arms manufacture in which 11 million voted. It all came to nothing and World War 2 began nearly 80 years ago.

The United Nations was the successor to the League of Nations. 75 years ago in October 1943 the foundations of the charter for a world peace organisation were strengthened in Moscow “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice...has brought untold sorrow to mankind” in order to “practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours”. The four that began this were China, Great Britain, Russia and the U.S.A.

War has not yet ceased and there has been conflict in various parts of the world ever since. Even now there are bitter civil wars in Syria and the Yemen. In Syria there have been 39 reported attacks of chemical weapons according to ‘I’ on 13 September this year. Since then a suicide bomb in eastern Afghanistan has now resulted in a death toll of 68 people. Huge war games began in Russia recently.

War appears to be something to live with although many are weary with the constant bad news. Nevertheless the scriptures tell us of a time when war will be no more, when peace and righteousness will reign. Isaiah 2 is one of a number of chapters in the Bible that tell us about the future. Verse 4 tells us about swords and spears being converted into agricultural tools implying times of peace and productivity. Isaiah 32 speaks of a time when a king shall reign in righteousness. “The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.” (Isa. 32. 17-18 ESV)

Zechariah uses much of the language of war such as chariots but follows this with “the counsel of peace” that will come afterwards. The wonderful counsellor and Prince of Peace will be fully active as a peacemaker between God and all people in due time and of this peace there shall be no end (Isa. 9. 7).

The Royal Mail here in the U.K. is experiencing issues with the service to Nigeria and some packages are being returned—“Mail Service Suspended”. We apologise if that has affected you receiving the monthly this year.

Magazine content. What is published is believed to have a wide interest, but everything printed may not necessarily be the opinion of the editor and his colleagues.

THE LAST TRUMP

The Day of Judgment is to be announced to the world by the sound of “Gabriel’s Trumpet”, the Last Trump! That is still orthodox theology, for little has been done since medieval times to rationalise this vivid symbol of the manner in which God will apprise the nations that their time of rule—or rather, perhaps, misrule—is ended and He is about to intervene in earth’s affairs for the institution of the Age of blessing and of world conversion. It is not yet realised as widely as it should be that the New Testament “Day of Judgment” is not for the purpose solely of passing sentence upon the unregenerate but also, and more importantly, to bring men to a full knowledge of God’s ways and purpose and of the salvation that inheres in Christ, and to afford a full and fair opportunity, in the light of full knowledge and ability, to accept or reject Christ and the life that only He can impart. All that is the work of a period, a long period measured against the scale of human history; “Gabriel’s Trumpet” will continue sounding throughout its duration and not be silent until all of God’s human creatures will have made their free and unfettered choice for good or evil, for life or death.

That the various allusions to the Last Trump in the New Testament are symbols is very generally accepted. This sophisticated Age is hardly likely to be either impressed or terrified by an audible sound from the sky, even if the heavenly messenger should be literally visible up amongst the clouds. The whole thing would be dismissed as a rather ingenious advertising stunt. The Scriptures have something important to tell us about the manner in which the imminence of Divine intervention in earth’s affairs will be made known to mankind and this particular symbolic representation is one of the means.

There are three allusions in the New Testament which are relevant. One, in Rev. 11. 15-19, is detailed and constitutes a clear picture of the entire process covered by the “Last Trump”; the others, in 1 Thess. 4. 16 and 1 Cor. 15. 52, are casual references intended to be understood in the light of the Revelation passage. The whole is based upon the use of the trumpet in Old Testament narratives as the summons to war, the alarm of approach of an enemy, and in a different sphere, to announce the accession of a king. Cases in point are Jud. 3. 27, Zeph. 1. 16, Joel 2. 1 and Jer. 6. 1 where the trumpet is both the signal of approach of the enemy and

summons to prepare for battle. Two instances where the accession of a king was made known by the blowing of trumpets are those of Solomon (1 Kings 1. 34) and Jehu (2 Kings 9. 13). A rather striking usage appears in Isa. 27. 13 where the prophet says that in the day of Israel's regathering at the end of the Age "*the great trumpet shall be blown*" and Israel shall return from the countries of their dispersion to serve the Lord in a cleansed and sanctified Jerusalem. It is obvious that this "great trumpet" is synonymous with the "Last Trump" since this regathering is one of the processes that characterises the period with which that Trump deals.

Coming then to Rev. 11. 15-19 (margin*) we have the culmination of a series of historical events symbolised by the preceding six trumpets expressed in the words "*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever...And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them that destroy (corrupt) the earth...and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*" All this is a vivid picture of a great commotion upon earth indicative of the final stages of human rule and the supersession of that rule by the incoming Divine government which in many other Scripture connections is associated with the Second Advent of Christ. The mind is inevitably taken back to the prophetic visions of the prophet Daniel. In one of the most striking (Daniel chap. 7) he sees a procession of ferocious wild animals symbolising the successive great empire powers of this world and their coming into judgment before the Most High; their condemnation and destruction is followed by the appearance of the "Son of Man" who, with his saints, establishes an everlasting kingdom upon earth which shall never pass away. Succeeding revelations (chaps. 11 & 12) indicate that the powers of this world do not submit without a struggle but eventually the powers of heaven are victorious and the result is the suppression of all that corrupts the earth and the commencement of the Messianic Age, the purpose of which is to complete the Divine plan for mankind.

All this is not the work of a moment. There is a period of time here envisaged during which the anger of the nations rises to a climax, the

world of man disintegrates, and the invading power of heaven becomes more and more evident in the sequence of events. There are “voices in heaven” which proclaim what is happening, voices of those who see what is coming and proclaim it abroad, unheeded at first but listened to at the end. Some of those voices were raised over a century ago; the seventh trumpet has been sounding since then and will go on sounding until what Paul calls “this present evil world” has utterly passed away and been replaced by the “world to come” in which dwelleth righteousness.

The next most significant allusion is that in 1 Thess. 4. 16 descriptive of the Advent; *“the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise—”* The trumpet here is associated with resurrection, the resurrection of the Church. This is confirmed by the association of the third allusion, that in 1 Cor. 15. 51-52; *“We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”*. In these references the trumpet becomes the symbol of the summons to the church, faithful Christians of all generations, past and present, to enter into full union with their Lord in the celestial world through the gate of resurrection. None would take this literally; no trumpet blast can wake the dead; the resurrection and the “change” of the church to celestial conditions is effected by Divine power exerted in the realm of the spirit and there can be no outward evidence of this event in the sight of men upon earth. Nevertheless the trumpet that has been sounding throughout this “End of the Age” period is also an indication that at some time during the sequence of events which comprise the period this great happening takes place, and before the end of that sounding. The same trumpet announces the revelation of the Lord from heaven accompanied by his saints in glorious manifestation (Matt. 13. 43) and that must obviously follow the stage in this period that witnesses their resurrection to celestial conditions.

The general picture in all this symbolism is that the seventh trumpet announces and heralds the Advent of our Lord as earth’s new king and draws attention to the various aspects of that Advent. This is no sudden single catastrophic event in which He appears instantaneously in all the glory of his regal authority and the powers of earth immediately submit to him. His coming is a progressive one, running parallel with the continuing

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disintegration of earthly power and marked by the emergence of those factors which are to constitute the salient features of his kingdom when it is established in power and universally accepted. These are the signs of his *parousia*, his presence, in whatever form that presence has reality—and we do not really know what that form is since it belongs to the world of the spirit and not that of the flesh. The worsening strife and tumult amongst the nations and the increasing inability of ordered government to arrest the forces making for disorder and disruption is one sign. The tottering financial and economic structure, threatening more and more an imminent collapse with all that means for world disaster, is another. The nuclear threat, the more menacing as its possession passes into the hands of younger and more irresponsible powers, is another. World pollution, ever approaching nearer to the point of no return, is another. On the other side of the canvas, the very evident realisation of the prophetic programme in the restoration of the earthly covenant people, Israel, to the land which is to be the focal point of Divine government upon earth, is another, as is the tremendous increase of knowledge and enlightenment both upon the purposes and laws and character of God which has come as a result of Christian Bible study and evangelical effort for more than a century past, and the equally remarkable progress in the understanding of Nature and Nature's processes over the same period which is laying the foundation for man's intelligent use of the earth's resources for his daily life in the Age to come. All this, and somewhere within this same period, the most momentous event of all, even though hidden from human perception, the resurrection of the "dead in Christ" and the change to celestial conditions of those who at this time are "alive and remain", preparatory to their joint union with Christ and association with him in the coming kingdom. This is why many thoughtful Christians, not confined to any one denomination, have seen and proclaimed, that we are now living "in the days of the Son of Man", that, in a manner beyond our capacity to define or visualise in concrete terms, we have already entered into the initial stages of his Second Advent, stages that will become more and more influential in the earth until, as Isaiah (42. 4) predicted, "*He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law*". All these things are elements in the sounding of the Last Trump.

AOH

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

6. Chariots of Judgment

The last of the visions is simple in its elements. Two mountains, from between which come four chariots, passing before the watching prophet and his angelic guide to proceed in differing directions until they are lost to sight. Apparently insignificant, but in reality full of meaning.

“There came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass” (copper) (ch. 6. 1). What is signified by the two mountains? The Hebrew text has the definite article *“the two mountains”* as though something specific is intended, not just mountains in the general sense. What could such an expression have conveyed to the Israelites who first heard Zechariah’s words? Mountains consisting of solid copper are unnatural to say the least, but every Israelite was well acquainted with the Divine promise to their forefathers concerning the land they were to inherit *“a land...out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass (copper)”* (Deut. 8. 9). Primitive Israel existed in what we call the Bronze Age, in which copper held the place today occupied by steel, and the land of the mountains of copper, to every true Israelite, was the land of Israel. The two mountains of the vision, then, might very well picture the dual kingdoms of Israel and Judah, as they existed side by side in the years before the great captivities.

Against the background of these two kingdoms are displayed the four chariots. The foremost one was drawn by red horses, the second by black, the third by white, and the fourth by what the A.V. calls *“grisled and bay”* horses (6. 3), actually “dappled strong” horses. *“Amutstism”*, rendered “bay”, is a word meaning strong, active or nimble, as applied to horses. (The A.V. “bay”, meaning a deep red, arises from the desire of the A.V. translators to find a place in verse 7 for the red horses appearing in verse 2 who otherwise have no assigned destination, and is based upon the assumption that *amutstism* should be read *adamim*, for which there is no warrant). In reply to the prophet’s query the revealing angel told him that these chariots were the *“four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the LORD of all the earth”* (6. 5), that the one drawn by black horses goes into *“the north country”* and is followed there by the white, and that the dappled ones go into the south country. Here the A.V. confuses the issue by postulating an extra chariot drawn by the “bay” going *“to and fro through the earth”* and this has to be corrected. The

sense of vv. 6-7 is that the dappled ones go forth first toward the south country, and that being active or nimble (the “most strong” as the Douay version has it) proceed to penetrate other parts of the earth. They “*sought to go*”, says the narrator “*that they might walk to and fro through the earth*” (v. 7). This expression “to and fro”, is derived from the verb *halak*, “to go” continuously as with settled intent, in specific directions not otherwise defined but not necessarily an alternative on a single path as is meant by the present usage of “to and fro”. Our term “hither and thither” more accurately represents the term to us.

Now what is the explanation? It will not escape notice that the colours of the first three horses are the same as those of the riders in the vision (1. 8). (The notes in chapter 1 have already shown that “speckled” in that chapter should properly read “black”). The fourth colour, grised or “dappled”, is new. It must also be noted that although four chariots come before the prophet’s attention only three are assigned destinations. Of the first, the red, nothing more is said.

As a symbol the chariot pictures judgment, usually Divine judgment. “*For behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury.*” (Isa. 66. 15). “*The chariots of God are twenty thousand,...the Lord is among them, as in Sinai,...to GOD the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies...such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses*” (Psa. 68. 17-21). These chariots, said the angel, are synonymous with the “four spirits—or winds—of the heavens”, and the four winds of heaven are also used as a symbol of Divine judgment. The eloquent passage in Psalm 18 illustrates that. “*The earth shook and trembled...the LORD also thundered in the heavens...the foundations of the world were discovered,...O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils*” (Psa. 18. 7-15). “*With his mighty wind shall he (the LORD) shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it*” (Isa. 11. 15). Speaking of his judgment on Israel, God says “*But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not*” (Zech. 7. 14). Hence these four chariots are vehicles of Divine judgment, symbols of the wrath of God going out to whoever and whatever is represented by the “north country” and the “south country”.

Consistently in the Old Testament Babylon is depicted as the “north country”, the land of the north; although geographically it lies east of

Israel. The fact that it's invading armies had to descend on the Israelites from the north in order to avoid the intervening desert gave rise to the name. The "south country" is Egypt and Arabia. With these facts in mind the interpretation of the vision begins to take shape. It is a picture of Divine retribution overtaking the powers which through history had oppressed and enslaved Israel, or were yet to do so. The standpoint from which the chariots are viewed is that of Zechariah's own day and this explains the omission of the red horses' onward progress. As in chapter 1, the red horses represented Assyria, the power to which Israel was enslaved in the first of the great captivities, and in Zechariah's day judgment on Assyria had already been executed. Assyria, with its capital city Nineveh, disappeared from history a century before Zechariah lived. That chariot had already passed on its way. "*I will break the Assyrian in my land*" the Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah "*and upon my mountains tread him under foot...the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?*" (Isa. 14. 25-27). The red chariot of judgment upon Assyria appeared to Zechariah's prophetic consciousness but he did not see it proceed on its mission because that was already past history. Assyria had fallen and was no more.

Not so the case with the chariot of black horses. That again as in chapter 1, pictured Babylon and the judgment to come upon that land. Said the angel (v. 6) "*The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them*". The white logically picture Persia, as in chapter 1. Divine retribution began to come upon Babylon in Zechariah's own lifetime; he was there at the time and he witnessed the fall of the city and the death of Belshazzar its last king. Although Persian rule commenced there and then the Babylonian nation continued and the city did not disappear at once; something like two centuries elapsed before Babylon completely lost its commercial importance and the city reverted to its dust. Judgment was being executed all that time. And more or less contemporaneous with the latter part of that period the succeeding empire, Persia, began to receive its due at the Lord's hand by the agency of Greece, so that by the time of Alexander of Greece that white-horsed chariot also had completed its mission. Both Babylon and Persia in turn had suffered the fate of Assyria their predecessor even as the Hebrew prophets had foretold. It is of these chariots that the proclamation of v. 8 is made: "*these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country*". That word quieted means to permit rest or to pacify.

The downfall and destruction of the successive empires. Assyria, Babylon, Persia, as it were satisfied the Divine justice; after the chariots of judgment had completed their work the Divine Spirit was “pacified” so far as those lands were concerned. Something like this must have been in the mind of Jeremiah when he contemplated the same kind of retribution coming upon other of the enemies of God. “*O thou sword of the LORD*” he declaimed “*how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge*” (Jer. 47. 6-7). Here in the case of the “north country”, the sword of the Lord, at last, was quiet.

There is still the fourth chariot to consider. This went forth to “*the south country*”. In Zechariah’s day this was yet to come. After the fall of Persia the dispersion and exile of Israel lay in the south and west rather than in the north and east. Greece succeeded Persia as Israel’s overlord but there was no captivity in Greece. From this time the dispersion of Israel was, first, south into Egypt and Arabia, and later, about and after the time of the First Advent, when Rome succeeded Greece, into North Africa and Europe, the west. So the dappled strong horses may well represent the variable but mainly harsh rule of Greece which sent so many of the sons of Israel southward, followed by the fall of Greece and of Egypt before the armed might of Rome. Then came the time when the “strong” of the horses began to go “hither and thither” through the earth. Just as the power of Rome has extended throughout the earth—the Mediterranean world which is what the Old Testament means by the term—and just as the dispersion of Israel has extended similarly, so does the chariot of judgment follow, bringing Divine displeasure upon every vestige of evil rule and evil power until all is destroyed before the coming of earth’s new King. Perhaps this fourth chariot is still going “hither and thither” through the earth and the disruption and disintegration so prevalent today is the final manifestation of its presence. The whole earth has entered into judgment, but afterwards comes the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Horse/ Chariot	Colour	Place to	Represents
1	Red	n/a	Assyria
2	Black	North	Babylon
3	White	North	Persia
4	Dappled & strong	South & to &/fro	Greece, Rome...

Thus seen, this last of Zechariah’s visions pictures the progressive judgments of God upon evil powers in the earth preparatory to the

establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. From the re-establishment of Israel in the sixth century B.C., pictured in the first vision, the prophet had seen in symbol the development of the Christian Church, the preparation of the earthly Holy Nation, the dawn of the Messianic Age with its light and life, its standards of right and wrong, the elimination of evil, and the completion of retribution upon the evil forces of this world. Now the vision comes to an end. As commentary upon the whole he was now to engage in a kind of symbolic charade in which he with his fellows would present in dramatic form a picture of the Millennial world which is yet to be, and this is the meaning of the remaining passage in chapter 6.

Verses 9-15 tell how the word of the Lord came to Zechariah telling him, in effect, that three men were coming from Babylon, apparently bearing gifts of gold and silver to the Jewish community. He was to take a portion of this tribute, and of it construct a crown with which, in a symbolic ceremony, he would crown Joshua the High Priest and proclaim him as the Lord's anointed, the "Branch", a Messianic title. Thus consecrated, Joshua was to reign as a royal priest in the day of the completed Temple, and foreigners from far-off lands would come and share with Israel in the work and service of God. All of which was a wonderful idea never realised in that day; Joshua never became a ruler on a throne, and foreigners were never accepted within the ranks of Israel. The entire proceeding was a prophecy of a then far future day.

"Take from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon; and go the same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown." This is the R.S.V. rendering of vv. 10-11, supported by other modern translators. The A.V., based on the Vulgate, has confused the text and rendered it difficult to understand. The plural "crowns" as in the A.V. refers to several circlets of which the single crown is composed (this incidentally is the meaning of the "many crowns" of Rev. 19. 12.). It was a common thing for visitors from the Jewish community in Babylon to visit their brethren in Judea bringing valuable gifts for the new Temple. None of the four individuals here mentioned can be identified elsewhere in Old Testament history although two Jedaiahs, both priests, were in Judea at the time of Zechariah. Suffice it that these three had come from Babylon with their gifts, that Zechariah met them and went with them to the home of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, and there made this crown. Evidently

Joshua the High Priest was present, and probably a company of others, so that Zechariah was able in an impressive fashion to crown Joshua and declare the Divine decree.

*“Thus speaketh the LORD of Hosts:
Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH,
And he shall build the Temple of the LORD,
And he shall bear the glory
And shall sit and rule upon his throne.
And he shall be a priest upon his throne.
And the counsel of peace shall be between them both”* (vv. 12-13)

This can only be understood as a Messianic prophecy and the whole proceeding as a tableau depicting the ruling power of the Messianic Age. To depict Joshua himself as a crowned ruler in Judea at that time would not only be treason in the eyes of Persia, for Judea was a subject State, but treason against God, for the one who was to become both king and priest and dignified with the title of “the Branch” (of David) must come of Judah, the royal tribe. Joshua was of Levi, the priestly tribe. Thus the interpretation must be carried forward into the day when the Royal Priest, the one “*after the order of Melchisedec*” (Heb. 7) assumes his office and power “in glory”, and this points unmistakably to our Lord “at his coming and his Kingdom”. To this the language fits. “The Branch” is his title as the scion of David’s house, the “*root and...offspring of David*” (Rev. 22. 16). He “*grow(s) up out of his place*” (v. 12) from the days of his humanity at his First Advent to the glory of his Second Advent. He shall sit and rule upon his throne both as king and as priest with complete harmony between the two functions; “*the counsel of peace shall be between them both*”. (v. 13) One could picture this declaration as the Divine announcement to all the world at the time of the investiture of earth’s rightful King in the dawn of the Millennial Age, calling all men to take heed to the new world order headed by this Priest-King for their salvation.

It is noteworthy that whereas Joshua was used in chapter 3 to prefigure the cleansing and development of the Church during this present Age he becomes, in chapter 6, the symbol of the reigning Christ in the next; it will not escape notice in this connection that the Church is destined to be associated with her Lord in the kingly-priestly work of that Age so that the use of Joshua as a symbol of both “Christ the Head and the Church which is his body” is perhaps not altogether accidental.

“And the crown shall be to Heldai, and to Tobjiah, and to Jedaiah,... for a memorial in the temple of the LORD. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD” (vv. 14-15). Two minor corrections in the text have to be made. “*Helem*” in v. 14 is obviously “*Heldai*” as in v. 10, this is evidently a copyist’s error at some early date, the *daleth yod* (DI) at the end of the word having been mistaken for *mem* (M), a mistake due to similarity between the characters if written somewhat carelessly in the manuscript. “*Hen*” in the same verse is not a proper name and by some translators is linked with a word meaning favour or kindness; thus the R.V. Margin and others render “for the kindness of the son of Zephaniah” which removes all disparity between this verse and verse 10. It is now possible to take a look at the apparent meaning of the statement. The crown, following its use for the ceremonial crowning of Joshua, is said to be laid up in the Temple as a memorial to the three pious men who brought the original gift from Babylon, and to record the “kindness” of Josiah the son of Zephaniah who received them into his house and provided a place in which the ceremony could be performed. Since the entire proceeding has its setting in the Millennial Age and the “crown” is laid up in the newly built Temple after the Priest-King has been crowned and therefore presumably entered upon the duties of his office, the Temple can hardly represent other than the edifice built during that Age, the all-righteous system of world government instituted and presided over by our Lord and his Church—corresponding to some extent to the Holy City of Revelation. Within that system of administration there will be a memorial of some who in a past time brought their gifts away from the lands of unrighteousness, and within the confines of a friendly house contributed their symbol of faith that the time for the reign of earth’s great Priest-King had come. If we take it that those three unknown men, Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, pictured all of Israel who in the Last Days come in faith, away from the lands of the old world into the friendly land which is to be the nucleus of the Kingdom on earth, and for a short time join concert with those who, like Josiah the son of Zephaniah, are already in that land living in faith and hope, expressing their belief in the imminent coming of earth’s new King, then perhaps the house of Josiah can symbolise the land, and the four figures in the tableau, the people, whose faith and works immediately prior to the establishment of the Kingdom in full sight of all people will be remembered for ever—a “memorial in the temple of the LORD.”

Logically enough, it is then that *“they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD”*. (v. 15) In that glorious Age men will come from all nations, from earth’s remotest bound, to play their part in the building of the new social system which is described so succinctly in the New Testament as *“a new heavens and a new earth, wherein (in which) dwelleth righteousness”*. (2 Pet. 3. 13)

To be continued
AOH



REJOICE! rejoice! the promised time is coming!
Rejoice! rejoice! the wilderness shall bloom;
And Zion’s children soon shall sing;
The deserts all are blossoming.
Rejoice! rejoice! the promised time is coming;
Rejoice! rejoice! the wilderness shall bloom.
The gospel banner, wide unfurled,
Shall wave in triumph o’er the world,
And every creature, bond or free,
Shall hail the glorious jubilee.

Rejoice! rejoice! the promised time is coming;
Rejoice! rejoice! Jerusalem shall sing.
From Zion shall the law go forth,
And all shall hear, from south to north.
Rejoice! rejoice! the promised time is coming;
Rejoice! rejoice! Jerusalem shall sing;
And truth shall sit on every hill,
And blessings flow in every rill,
And praise shall every heart employ,
And every voice shall shout for joy.

Rejoice! rejoice! the promised time is coming;
Rejoice! rejoice! the “Prince of Peace” shall reign.
And lambs may with the leopard play,
For naught shall harm in Zion’s way:
Rejoice! rejoice! the promised time is coming;
Rejoice! rejoice! the “Prince of Peace” shall reign.
The sword and spear, of needless worth,
Shall prune the tree and plow the earth;
For peace shall smile from shore to shore,
And nations shall learn war no more.

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WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR

Isaiah 9. 6. *“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”*

Christians across the world celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the fulfilment of the prophecy written so long ago by Isaiah. The first part of the prophecy has been completed in full, but the second part: “the government shall be upon his shoulder(s)” is still eagerly awaited by Christians the world over. Our Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6. 10 “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”, is the most often quoted prayer by Christians and brings out our desire for this change in government.

This is followed by four of the throne names of the Messiah one of which is Wonderful Counsellor. The coming son of David who will carry out a royal programme that will cause all the world to marvel. These plans are set out in Isaiah chapters 11, 24 and 27.

Strong’s concordance gives the meanings of the words as:

- The number for wonderful is 6382 *Pel’-leh*; from 6381 *Paw-law*, to separate, to distinguish, to do miracles, a marvellous thing.
- The number for counsellor is 3289 *Yaw-ats*: to advise (well), determine, guide or purpose

The Oxford Dictionary gives the meanings as:

- Wonderful: marvellous, surprising, exceeding what was expected, remarkable or admirable
- Counsellor: adviser (at law), advising barrister.

Writing with divine inspiration Isaiah has depicted our Lord in this context in a way that not many Christians have taken note of or even considered, that of a wonderful counsellor, or if they do they see it only in the future. During Christ’s first advent there are several accounts that bring out this attribute beautifully.

The first example is recorded in Luke 2. 46-49. In this instance Jesus was twelve years of age and his parents had taken him to Jerusalem for the

Passover, and on their journey home Joseph and Mary realised that Jesus was not with them. “After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that you sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

OUR LORD’S KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM ON THE INTENT OF THE LAW

During our Lord’s three and a half year ministry there were many examples of his understanding of not only the Law but its intent. A clear example of this is found in Mark 2. 23-27. “He (Jesus) went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have you never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath”.

Our Lord was not objecting to the law about the Sabbath, as written in Exod. 20. 8-11 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,...nor thy cattle...For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day:”, but to the ridicules, restrictions and misinterpretations that the Pharisees had added to the law. David had not been punished for breaking the law or considered blameworthy because of the emergency of his situation.

The attitude of the Pharisees is probably best illustrated in the incident recorded in Mark 3. 1-6 “And he (Jesus) entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he said unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the

sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.” The Pharisees were more interested in the keeping of the letter of the law to show others how perfect they were, rather than having compassion for the handicapped.

Another example of our Lord’s knowledge and wisdom of the Law is written in Matthew 22. 15-22. “The Pharisees...took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.” Our Lord recognised the temporary power that his Father had given unto Caesar, and that as followers we were instructed not to be seditious, but thankful, holy, happy and subject to the powers that be, recognising them as ordained of God and not merely of man as it also says in Romans 13. 1-2 “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” and also verse 7 (Diaglott) “Render, therefore, to all their dues; to whom tax is due, tax; to whom custom, custom; to whom fear, fear; to whom honour, honour.”

There are many other examples of our Lord as a wonderful counsellor, in many of the parables and other times.

MEDIATOR

One example, is the work of Christ as a mediator as found in 1 Timothy 2.

1-6 “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men...that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

The word *mediator* (v. 5) according to Strong’s concordance 3316 is *mēsītēs* which has the meaning of a go-between, a reconciler, a middleman. One who brings about friendly relations between two or more people. It corresponds to the “daysman” of Job 9. 33 “Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.” Other translations show the word daysman as umpire, arbitrator or mediator.

This word is used in the new testament 6 times and is used to describe the official position of Jesus Christ as He related to man. He is the peacemaker between God and man. He is the agent by whom the new covenant between God and man is made effective. Hebrews 9. 15 (NIV) says “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first (law) covenant.”

Paul in 2 Cor. 5. 18-21 expands this thought “all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Paul brings out the beautiful thought here of the fact that God himself provided the way for mediation through his son Christ Jesus.

Throughout the Bible the estrangement between man and God is repeatedly set forth. God is the moral ruler; man, His natural subject, has violated His laws, hence has gone away from God. All men are thus

alienated. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them....so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man...who changed the truth of God into a lie.” (Rom. 1. 18-26)

Three inescapable moral facts never cease to be realised by man, namely; the fact of a moral order, the fact of sin and the fact that atonement must be provided to bring release from guilt. Since man cannot keep the laws of God perfectly from birth until death, it is evident that he cannot be saved from the curse of sin (death) by the Law. For “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3. 20). Also as its says in Romans 8. 3-4 “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Paul speaking to the Galatians (3. 24) tells them “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Thus through mankind realising his shortcomings “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3. 23); will eventually turn to Christ as their mediator so that they can be brought into harmony with God as it states in Habakkuk 2. 14 that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

PARAKLETOS

The next aspect to examine is the role that Christ plays as set out in 1 John 2. 1. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an *advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”. So John tells us we have an advocate, Christ, who will intercede on our behalf with our heavenly Father. The word translated as advocate according to Strong’s Concordance 3875 is the Greek word *paraklētōs* which has the meaning of an intercessor, consoler, advocate or comforter.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words gives further insight into this word *advocate*. It states that it has the literal meaning of "called to one's side," *i.e.*, to one's aid, is primarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, **counsel** for the defense, an advocate: then generally, one who pleads another's cause, an intercessor, advocate.

It is only used 5 times in the New Testament, and, then only by the apostle John. It is translated *comforter* 4 times, restricted to the upper room with the disciples about the heavenly Father sending the Holy Spirit, and *advocate* only once when John was writing about his little children having Jesus Christ as an advocate with the Father.

In its widest sense, it signifies a succourer, comforter. Christ was this to His disciples, by the implication of his words in John 14. 16 "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another (*allos*, another of the same sort, not *heteros*, different) Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" The other three times it is translated *comforter* are:

- John 14. 26 "The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
- John 15. 26 "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth".
- John 16. 7 "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

Returning to the verse in 1 John chapter 2 to consider the context in which the statement "*we have an advocate with the Father*" is written. It is written to "*My little children*". At the time of writing this the apostle John was quite elderly and very mellow because of his experiences. In fact he may have been the last man alive who had walked and talked with Jesus. John has nothing but tenderness for those who are his little children in the Faith. One commentator suggests it should more properly read "*My darlings*". In this opening address there is the yearning, affectionate tenderness of a pastor for his people, whom he has known a long time, and who sometimes become lax or wayward.

His purpose was that they sin not. John refers to the cleansing blood of

Christ as it says, “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1. 7) In verse 9 he speaks of the forgiveness of God that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This is not intended to make light of our sins because he states that one can never escape the specific command of Jesus to “sin no more.” (John 5. 14) But on the other hand, he adds that “*if any man sin*”, God has graciously made provision for their restoration.

The clause is significant. It clearly indicates the author’s conviction that acts of sin, stumbling through weakness or temptation, as opposed to the continuous sinful habit, happen. The provision that God has made for his sinning children is now unfolded. “*We have an advocate with the Father*”.

Christ is our advocate to plead our cause with the Father, who loves and forgives His children. Jesus says in John 16. 27 that “the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me”. God is not now to be regarded as our Judge but as our Father. The person who believes in Christ already “has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5. 24 RSV) “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Romans 8. 1,33,34)

Once the sinner has been justified by God his Judge, he has entered the family of God and become related to God as his son. If he should sin, he does not need another justification from the divine Judge. He is a child of God; he needs the father’s forgiveness. This is assured to him through the advocacy of Jesus Christ the righteous.

Christ is a Wonderful Counsellor and as it says, in the prophecy with the opening text in Isa. 9. 7 “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

RC

PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Part 12

Prayer a Powerful Spiritual Force

“Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” (Mark 11. 22-24)

None of God’s people would think of praying for the removal of a mountain except he knew, from the study of the word, that the heavenly Father had made this imperative in the outworking of His Plan. Then he would pray without doubt in his heart that the mountain be cast into the sea; for he knows that no power in existence can prevent the fulfilment of God’s will as revealed in His Word of Truth.—Luke 1. 37

According to the words of Jesus, prayer is superior to the physical laws of nature. When Elijah prayed that it might not rain in the land of Israel God heard his prayer, and in response so ordered climatic conditions that rain could not fall. For Elijah’s prayer was the expression of the Divine will as previously recorded by Moses, namely, that if the people of Israel forsook Jehovah and served other gods, he would make the heavens like brass and the earth like iron; he would restrain the rain and dew. (Deut. 28. 23-24) In these days the nation had disobeyed the Lord’s command and worshipped Baal; therefore Elijah declared boldly in implicit faith in the power of his God to perform that which was written: “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” (1 Kings 17. 1) James tells us that Elijah “prayed earnestly that it might not rain.” (James 5. 17) He was a man subject to like passions as we are; and his prayer was honoured because uttered, not only in harmony with the Divine will, but also *with the ultimate blessing of the people in view*. When, on the exposure of the false prophets, the disillusioned Israelites acknowledged their fault and publicly renounced Baal and proclaimed Jehovah as the true God, Elijah besought the great Creator of all to again fulfil His Word in blessing the land with rain; for the nation had been cured of its sin sickness.—Deut. 28. 12-14; 2 Chron. 6. 26-31; 1 Kings 17. 21-24; James 5. 15-18

God has never been without his witnesses; and while those faithful servants (the most prominent of whom are enumerated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews—see also Heb. 12. 1) could not comprehend the full significance of their words and works, they evidently expressed correctly the details of the will of God due in their times, that all might receive realization. These details of the Plan were necessary to be accomplished in the days of the early witnesses; they were types of greater enactments in a later period, or served as example for the instruction of the heavenly Father's spiritual children.

Through the faithful office of his discerning servant Elijah, God was enabled to foreshow a greater fulfilment of that word which He at the first uttered by the mouth of Moses in the law, and again through the saying of Solomon at the consecration of the temple. (Compare 1 Kings 16. 31; 18. 13, with Rev. 2. 20; 11. 6.) We refer to the 1260 symbolical "days" in the Gospel Age (*i.e.*, 3 ½ symbolical years. Each day in the type represents a literal year in the antitype), when the refreshing showers of God's truth were shut off. (Deut. 32. 2; Isa. 55. 10,11) This was while the apostate church-state system, named the Antichrist, held the sovereignty of the world, a dreadful period well prefigured by the evil reign of Jezebel and her pliant husband King Ahab. Like Elijah, who had providential sustenance through the drought in Israel, so the Lord's faithful people during the corresponding antitypical interval of the spiritual famine, when they were in the "wilderness" condition, received the miraculous nourishment from the Word of Life. (Rev. 12. 6) It was the simple, unwavering trust and obedience of Elijah, which made possible this important type and lesson. What far-reaching influences are attached to the prayers of the faithful! What great honour it is to be so used by God!

The heathen god Baal was the representation of Satan himself, the one-time brilliant spirit being who, lifted up in pride because of his beauty, became the adversary of the Almighty. (Ezek. 28. 11-19) As the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4. 4) he seduced for a season the covenanted people of the Lord, assuming for the purpose this title of "Baal" (lord). But the prayers of Elijah overcame the oppressing power which the evil one had exercised upon God's heritage. The prayer of faith, expressing the revealed will of the great Law Giver as written in His Word, had set in motion even the physical forces of nature to vanquish the devil, that the Divine purpose might run the appointed course; for the nation of Israel

was typical and could not be diverted by any contrary spiritual influence continuously.—Isa. 14. 24-27

In assuring us that nothing at all can resist the power of the prayer of faith, Jesus seems to exaggerate in his instance of the mountain. But this is not so, for there are laws in existence more firmly founded than mountains, which can be removed by prayer. We have referred to the universal “law of sin and death” as it now holds sway since the fall of man. This law would be immovable were it not for the ransom sacrifice of Christ. A natural upheaval, or unremitting manual labour, can remove a mountain. Nothing but prayer, however, according to God’s arrangement in Christ, can enlist the aid of that law which will reverse the present law of sin and death. (Rom. 8. 2) Therefore, although natural forces when set in motion by God in response to prayer are impressive, the Christian knows that spiritual forces excel them.—John 14. 12,13

We do well to note that Jehovah does not permit us to comprehend and use spiritual powers unless we are in close contact with Him, mostly in secret prayer. (Matt. 6. 6) Knowledge of the Scriptural plan of salvation is not of itself sufficient to establish the quality of faith that is necessary. We must know the heavenly Father Himself and have fellowship with him and his Son, if we would gain the acceptable faith; and in this connection it is profitable to consider the following texts: Matt. 11. 25-27; John 17. 20-26; Eph. 1. 15-18; 3:14-19; Col. 1. 9-11; 2 Pet. 1. 2,3; 1 John 1. 3-7.

Next Time—The Adversary of God and His Anointed

ME



I KNOW not the way that's before me,
The joys or the griefs it may bring;
What clouds are o'erhanging the future,
What flowers by the wayside may spring.
But there's One who will journey beside me,
Nor in weal nor in woe will forsake;
And this is my solace and comfort,
“He knoweth the way that I take.”

Poems of Dawn

SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS

An old man, ready to depart this life, and a baby newly come to earth. An age in history, waxing old and ready to vanish away, and a new age, flushing into the roseate hues of dawn. These four met on the day that the aged Simeon came into the Temple and saw this young couple bringing their first-born child to be dedicated to the Lord. He had seen many such during his long life of service for his God, but this time there was a difference. That inward voice which had been his guide and mentor so many times in the past spoke again, and now for the last time. God had fulfilled his promise; the Spirit's assurance possessed his mind, and he knew with certainty that at last he was looking upon the Lord's Messiah.

Simeon was evidently one of the few in Israel who were prepared to receive the Messiah in the way He came, as a child, born in humble circumstances, without pomp, ostentation or show. The majority expected him in vastly different guise, as a mighty conqueror, bursting upon the world in all the splendour and power of his Heavenly glory. The many rejected him because of the manner of his Advent; the few, like Simeon, accepted him because by dint of reverent study of the Scriptures and constant waiting upon God they had a more accurate idea what to expect.

The child Jesus was six weeks old. According to the law of Moses, as recorded in Lev. 12. 1-8, a woman was considered unclean after the birth of a child, and—in the case of a boy child—must come to the sanctuary with an offering at the end of forty days. A lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtle dove for a sin offering was stipulated, and after the offering of these by the priest she was ceremonially clean again. A further stipulation provided that if the woman was unable—through poverty generally—to furnish a lamb, she could bring two turtle doves or pigeons, and the intimation in Luke 2. 24 that Mary did in fact avail herself of this concession is incidental evidence that Joseph and Mary were in poor circumstances. The Lord of all chose to identify himself with the poor rather than the rich when He laid aside the glory which He enjoyed with the Father “before the world was”, and became man for the suffering of death. The expression in Phil. 2. 7 that He “*made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant*” was literally true to the extreme. But, despite her poverty, Mary came also to present her child in dedication to God, to offer back the gift she had received from him to be

devoted to his service. That also was a requirement of the Law. Whenever a woman's first-born child was a son, that son was to be presented to the Lord. In ceremonial fashion that child was particularly the Lord's, and although whilst still on the way to the Promised Land the Lord arranged that the tribe of Levi should be exchanged for the first-borns of all tribes, so that the Levites became the dedicated ones to serve the people in the things of God, the people of Israel still retained the custom of presenting their first-born before the Lord in His sanctuary. So it came about that Mary and Joseph were to be found in the Temple on this particular day for the accomplishment both of the cleansing and the presentation.

It was thus that Simeon found them, as, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he came into the Temple Court. We do not know much about Simeon. He never appears again in the Gospel story and is not referred to anywhere else in the New Testament. The memory of the incident itself must have been preserved by Mary and related years later to Luke, for none of the men who afterwards became Jesus' disciples were there; most of them were probably not even born. There are a few distinct clues in the description from which some definite inferences can be drawn. Luke says that Simeon was "*just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ*". (Luke 2. 25-26). Only Mary could have known these facts and imparted them to Luke; it seems clear that Mary must have been previously acquainted with Simeon or at least knew him by repute. The word "just" could equally well be rendered "upright" or "righteous"; that for "devout" is one that is used to denote the more scrupulous and rigid aspect of religious life. This, added to the fact that Simeon was one who looked for the imminent coming of Messiah, and believed that when He came He would be a light, not only to Israel, but also the Gentiles, to all people, an unorthodox belief among the Jews of his day, makes it strongly probable that Simeon was a member of the little-known body of people called the Zadokites. During the century that immediately preceded the First Advent there had grown up a community which looked for the coming of Messiah in much the same way as the past two centuries have witnessed a similar expectation of the Second Advent among Christians, and who based their expectations upon the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and certain chronological calculations drawn from the same. With that outlook was associated a strong sense of dedication to God's service and holiness of

life which caused many of them to withdraw to a considerable extent from contact with the world around them. The sect known as the Essenes was strongly imbued with these views—the “Dead Sea Scrolls” have thrown new light upon this sect—and although Simeon was a very common name in Israel, and it is impossible to identify the one who is mentioned in Luke’s account, it is of interest to note that at the time of the death of Herod there was an aged Essene named Simeon who had gained some fame as an uncompromising critic of the King’s misdemeanours. This man may have been the same as Simeon in Luke’s account.

“—*waiting for the consolation of Israel.*” (v. 25). This word “consolation” has the meaning of one coming to the side of a person needing succour, comfort or salvation. It is rendered “consolation” or “comfort” on about twenty occasions in the New Testament, such as Acts 4. 36 “*Barnabas, ... son of **consolation***”, Heb. 6. 18 “*We...have...strong **consolation***”, Rom. 15. 4 “*That we through (by) patience and **comfort** of the scriptures might have hope*”; 2 Cor. 1. 3 “*The God of all **comfort***”. “*Parakletos*”, the Comforter, in John 14, referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit, is from the same root. In the context of Luke’s narrative the expression is used to denote the fulfilment of Israel’s national hope, the coming of the Messianic Kingdom which should exalt Israel to the headship of the nations and fulfil the Divine promise to Abraham, “*in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*”, (Gen. 28. 14) although it has to be admitted that Israel at the First Advent had largely forgotten that wider extension of God’s purpose. But Simeon was one who did believe, and now, by the inspiration of the Spirit, he knew the time had come.

It is not likely that Simeon was the priest into whose hands Mary’s offering was to be entrusted. He is not stated to be a priest, and in fact, the expression “a man in Jerusalem” seems to militate against the idea that he held official position in the Temple. There is also the fact that he was a prophet, and it is not usual for priests to be prophets. It seems more probable that Simeon was in the line of prophets whose last representative in the Old Testament was Malachi, and the last of the line John the Baptist. Both Malachi, four centuries before, and John the Baptist, thirty years after, spoke of the Light that was to enlighten the world; Simeon held that Light in his arms.

So he gave voice to that wonderful paean of praise which has become an

established part of formal church worship. *“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.”* (vv. 29-31) The old man had lived through the time of Israel’s greatest glory since the days of David and Solomon, that brief period after the Maccabeans had won freedom for the Jews, and Rome had not as yet fastened her grip upon the nation. He had seen the boundaries of the Jewish State pushed as far as ever they had been by Solomon, and Jewish ambassadors represent his country even at Rome, the greatest of Empires. Then he had seen disaster and civil war, and finally Pompey the Roman general ride into Jerusalem to force Judea into servitude again, and all the golden expectations vanish. With his fellows who had regard for the law of God he had writhed at the spectacle of Herod, the hated Edomite, ruling over the people of Israel, and had mourned the scandals and violent deeds which disgraced the once holy priesthood of Aaron. But now all that was forgotten; he held in his own arms the Lord’s Messiah, and with that inward conviction which is the inviolate (pure) possession of the man who is habitually guided by the Holy Spirit of God he knew that at last the promise had been fulfilled; God had indeed visited his people; the Christ had come.

The word “Salvation” in verse 30 is not the noun of that word, but the neuter form of the adjective, “that which brings salvation”. The Septuagint of Isa. 52. 10 *“all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God”* uses the same form of the word; the reference in both instances is to the fact that Christ is the one who brings, and effects, the salvation that God has planned for “whosoever will” of the entire human race. Simeon saw that clearly, and hence he was able to describe both that salvation and the Child who was to be the medium of that salvation as *“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”* (v. 32). The full force of that tremendous expression is only felt when one realises that the word “Gentiles” embraces all of mankind who are not Israelites, and hence is best rendered, as it is in so many modern translations, “nations”. *“A light to lighten the nations.” “That was the true Light,”* cried John *“which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”* (John 1. 9). God’s words cannot fail. Whether we understand the philosophy of the matter or not; whether we appreciate the Scriptural doctrine or not, whether we comprehend the Divine Plan for mankind or find his purpose dark and mysterious, it is true and gloriously true that every human creature that

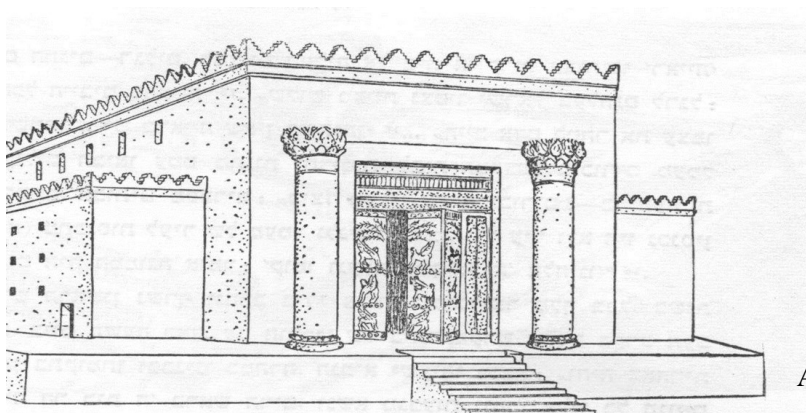
has ever been, or will ever be born, will, at some time before the final decision is taken, be enlightened by that light and be brought to a full realisation of the issue between good and evil. The fact that some may be impenitent and unregenerate to the end and wilfully refuse entry into life does not affect that. Not one single human soul will ever be able to say to God "I never had a fair chance".

It was this vision which Simeon had. He saw the Kingdom of Messiah as Paradise in which the foreview of Isaiah would be fulfilled "*Behold, the Lord GOD will come with a strong hand, and his arm (Christ) shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm(s), and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*" (Isa. 40. 10-11). In this Babe he saw the future King who was to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy, and he rejoiced, knowing that God had now moved to deliver, not only his own people Israel, but all mankind, from the thralldom of sin and death. He was ready now to go to his own rest, confident that like Daniel of old, he would stand in his lot at the end of the days. (Dan. 12. 13).

"*And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*" (v. 33). Most of the principal manuscripts have "his father" here but the A.V. follows the Alexandrian with "Joseph". It is of little consequence. If Luke did use the term "father" it was only because inevitably the common usage favoured this; obviously Joseph was the generally reputed father of Jesus, and only a very few could possibly have known of his virgin birth; Luke was, in any case, fully aware of that for he gives the best account. Joseph and Mary marvelled, not in the sense of astonishment as though they had not previously known of the Child's destiny, but in awe and wonder as they listened to Simeon's words and realised the magnitude of this great thing.

Then Simeon turned to Mary with a personal word for her: "*This child,*" he said, "*is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel....that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed....and (a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.)*" (vv. 34-35). How much did the saintly old man, so near the end of his earthly course, see into the events of the next forty years, and perceive the figure of Jesus among the people, preaching, exhorting, reproving; healing the sick, raising the dead, winning the love

of the common people and incurring the enmity of the Scribes and Pharisees? How much did the Holy Spirit show him of the Crucifixion, the little knot of women at the foot of the Cross, the distraught figure of the mother of Jesus? Did he even see, in shadowy outline, the figures of the Twelve, preaching to the dwellers in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost? How much of the future he did perceive we may not know, but that Simeon the just and devout, the one who waited all his life for the consolation of Israel, was indeed in the line of the Hebrew prophets, speaking and seeing as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, we do know. Like John the Baptist thirty years later, he could truly say *“I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”* (John 1. 34)

**ANNA**

Anna (Luke 2. 36-37) was the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was a godly woman who followed the prophetic tradition of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. Like them, she cared passionately about Israel and their dealings with the Lord. After seven years of marriage, Anna's husband died, and she devoted herself to serving God. The elderly prophet lived in the temple at Jerusalem and spent her days and nights fasting, praying and worshipping God.

Anna approached and also announced that the child was the long-awaited Messiah, and she praised God for fulfilling his promises to the Israelites.

Who's Who in the Bible

“And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” (Luke 2. 38)

‘They also serve who only stand and wait’

John Milton

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Extracts from the Bible Study Monthly on a New Testament book—Part 6

1 Peter 4. 7 *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*

(2 Pet. 3. 14) The Christian's lot in those days was a heavy one. Persecuted by Rome and its provincial governors, to the lion, the sword and the flame; hated, harassed and hunted to the death by their own kinsmen, with the ravages of war and desolation daily growing sharper and more widespread, it is not to be wondered at that these despised followers of a hated cause came to think that the whole realm of Nature was closing in upon them, and that the end of the world was near. Peter himself, in a previous letter, had given vent to an almost identical expression, when he assured his scattered brethren that "*the end of all things is at hand.*" (1 Pet. 4. 7). That this was a prevailing idea amongst the brethren is apparent also by the works of John (1 John 2. 18) "little children, it is a last hour" (not the last time, as A.V.), and also of James, "...the coming of the Lord draweth nigh...behold, the judge standeth before (at) the door." (James 5. 8-9). *Sep Oct '78*

Peter instructs us to have fervent love among ourselves...to "*Use hospitality one to another without grudging,*" and "*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another*", (1 Pet. 4. 9-10). This is an admonition to Godlikeness, for God delights to give: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." What is our attitude towards all His giving? Surely not by giving to Him in return, but by receiving from Him. Love wants no return for what it gives or does. God does not show favours in order to receive as much again. He gives because His heart is full of love, because He yearns to bless us. All he requires at our hands is that we gladly accept what He offers and give Him love in return. Consecration? Yes, but the consecration of love and not as recompense or repayment. *June '45*

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

1 Peter 4. 13

There was no beclouding or confusing the plain issue by theological definitions of doubtful value and full of incipient (initial) sources of argument and misunderstanding. To these earnest, enthusiastic souls,

participation in the sufferings of Christ was a sharing the life that He lived and enduring the same trials and distresses that came upon him in consequence of that way of life; and this participation was a very real thing to them. The history of early Christian persecution and martyrdom shows that. The ordeal of fire which so many of them went through and endured until death released them from their sufferings is too terrible to recount—historians have already described it in sufficient detail. Let it be realised that nothing but the one-ness of the Church in which all members suffered with one, and so the strength of all was given to one in the hour of need, could have enabled them thus to endure. Many in later times have wondered how those stoical souls withstood the fiendish cruelty of their pagan persecutors. The answer is that their strength was not of themselves, it was of the Body, and from him Who is the Head of that Body. And without the true unity of the Spirit the strength would not have been theirs. Paul knew this when he desired that he “may know...the *fellowship*—communion—of his (Christ’s) sufferings,” (Phil. 3. 10). He knew that in that common-sharing there resided a source of strength such as his own self-resolution could never give him. To the Corinthians he says “as ye are *partakers* (common-sharers) of the sufferings (both of Christ and of his disciples), so shall ye also be of the consolation” (2 Cor. 1. 7). That word “consolation” is full of significance here. It means the arrival of help at a time when it is needed (*paraklesis*—a being alongside to help). That is the effect of conscious sharing in the sufferings of one another and of our Master—it gives strength to withstand all that makes our Christian way difficult and arduous. There is then a “being alongside to help”. What wonder, then, that Peter, in the calm maturity of his old age, bids his suffering brethren to “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are *partakers*—common-sharers—of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (**1 Pet. 4. 13**). And it is Peter who takes us to the highest level of this communion of saints, for in two eloquent Scriptures he relates it to the consummation of our glorious hope. In 2 Pet. 1. 4 he tells us that we shall be “partakers—common-sharers—of the divine nature” and in **1 Pet. 5. 1** that we shall be “*partakers*—common-sharers—of the glory that shall be revealed:”. The communion of saints is not only one of suffering, it is also one of glory. The fellowship that is begun here below in conditions of “weakness and much trembling” is to be continued forever in that eternal kingdom where it will be expanded into the glorious fellowship of the general assembly of the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in heaven. *Mar Apr ’90*

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation” says the beloved James “for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1. 12). Note well that the crown is bestowed after the man has been tried (tested, proven-worthy) and the plain implication is that if he does not stand the proving and the trying process, then he loses the crown. Exhorting the elders of the Church to faithfulness in the discharge of their duties, Peter says (**1 Pet. 5. 4**) “*When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*”. That is conditional upon faithfulness to their charge. And to seal all these words with his own approval, our Lord says to all his Church and each member thereof “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2. 10). *Sep Oct ‘84*

1 Peter 5. 5 *Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

And then for the day-to-day struggle He giveth grace to such as repair to his Throne of Grace, humbly beseeching assistance in their time of need (Heb. 4. 16; Jas. 4. 6; **1 Pet. 5. 5**). *Mar Apr ‘83 & Nov ‘40*

1 Peter 5. 7 “*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.*”

Our burden-bearer. God is the most careful Being in the universe, we may be sure. He is not careful, in the sense in which the word is used in this text—in the sense of worry and unrest of mind—but He is care-full in the right and proper sense. There are cares that come to the Lord’s people because they are harassed by the adversary. These experiences the Lord permits for the very purpose of leading His people to cast their care upon Him, of bringing them closer to Himself, of teaching them patient endurance, of showing them more fully their need of Him, their utter helplessness and wretchedness without Him. But worries and frettings—anxieties that would hinder us in the Lord’s service, that would rob us of our peace in the Lord—should be dropped, not carelessly, however, but intelligently, with the thought that Jesus, our great Burden-bearer, has invited us, yea, urged us, to cast all our care—all that would disturb our peace upon Him. He will make our burden light and ease our tribulations. This is a test of faith, and cannot be attained otherwise than through faith in His love, faith in His promises. *Mar ‘41*

1 Peter 5. 8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

Says the Lord to Ezekiel (28. 12) “take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus,”. This word “lamentation” stamps the succeeding account as poetry, prophetic poetry, for “lamentation” here means a “mournful song” and its connection with the literal Tyre rests upon an analogy which is not immediately apparent at first sight—the meaning of the Hebrew word for “merchant” which (probably because of its trading and commercial implications) came to enshrine the combined ideas of one who goes about, goes to and fro, and one who bargains, misrepresents and slanders. In a rather clever manner Ezekiel pictures the one who, as St. Peter says in **1 Peter 5. 8**, goes about seeking who he may devour, and Jesus, was a liar and a deceiver from the beginning (John 8 .44) in the guise of a Tyrian merchant king, whose people likewise misrepresent and deceive in their commercial dealings. *May June '91*

The lion in this Age is a carnivorous beast. He devours flesh. The Lion which the Lamb engages in deadly combat has his archetype in the Devil, whom the Apostle Peter calls “a roaring lion, walketh (going) about, seeking whom he may devour”. (**1 Pet. 5. 8**). That Lion was defeated in his first endeavour to defy God and frustrate his plans for the human race. True, by virtue of his lie, uttered in the garden, man was enticed into sin, and reaped death, “and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:” (Rom. 5. 12). But he was defeated, nevertheless, for the fallen pair still believed in God and began to bring their children up in the knowledge and fear of God, and there is no evidence that they ever heeded or had anything to do with the Devil again. *May June '81*

As in every age, the Devil will appear in a number of guises. Sometimes his agents are openly the enemies of God and brazenly seek to render ineffective the work of his people. Frequently however the approach is more subtle and the sabotage is done in secret ways. There are many exhortations in the New Testament to watch. Often these are accepted as a reference to our observation of the political drama in the world around us. They would serve their purpose more effectively if the application was made by an internal examination of the heart by each believer upon himself. It was our Master who said “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26. 41), and years later, writing to the Colossians, (4. 2) Paul admonished “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” Peter exhorted the brethren to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking

whom he may devour;" (**1 Pet. 5. 8**). Each of these texts might have been the words of our Old Testament hero (Nehemiah) urging his faithful band of workers to greater building efforts. *July Aug '81*

1 Pet. 5. 10 "*The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*"

The above words were penned by the Apostle Peter who, after years of experience in the Master's service and under his discipline, through much tribulation had evidently reached the blessed experience of one established, strengthened and settled in the faith and in the practice of the principles of the gospel. Peter had much to suffer and endure in his continuous effort to overcome. In common with all our Lord's disciples, he had much to bear from without, in the way of reproach, and sometimes of persecution, for the Truth's sake. But he had probably much more to contend against from within. His disposition was naturally impulsive, wavering and difficult to bring under restraint, even when the Truth was clear to his mind and when his affections were fastened upon the Lord.

It should be the aim of every truly consecrated saint to reach this desirable state of strength and settled establishment in the faith. This condition cannot be reached at a single leap; it is gained by a gradual steady growth under the discipline of suffering—as the Apostle says, "*after ye have suffered a while*". "Now," as Paul remarks (Heb. 12. 11-13), "no chastening for the present seemeth...joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "Wherefore" with him we would add, "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way". Are you weary and disheartened in the journey, discouraged at your slow progress, and almost overwhelmed with the cares and various besetments of this life? Is a lethargy and indifference creeping over you, cooling your ardour for the Master's service, relaxing your energies in that direction, and enlisting your interest more and more in other matters? Then beware! It is high time to wake up. *July Aug '82*

1 Peter 5. 12 *By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.*

Silas remained at Antioch. Later on he became Paul's companion on his second missionary journey and appears later in the New Testament as Silvanus, the Latin form of his name (1 Thess. 1. 1; 2 Thess. 1. 1 & 1 Pet. 5. 12. *Mar Apr '88*

Now if Silas did in fact return to Antioch from Corinth round about A.D. 52 he might well have found Peter there and worked with him and earned that Apostle's regard. About a decade later we find Peter writing his First Epistle from Rome (the expression "*church that is at Babylon...saluteth you*" in **1 Pet. 5. 13** is almost certainly his guarded reference to Rome at the time of Nero's persecution although some do contend that Peter was writing from Babylon on the Euphrates or even from the Roman garrison of the same name in Egypt) and sending it to the Christians of the Greek provinces, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, by the hand of Silas (**1 Pet. 5. 12**). So at this time Silas was in Rome with Peter (and, incidentally, with John Mark). Paul, following his acquittal, had already left Rome; this would be during the several years' gap between his first and second trials when no one knows where he really went. Spain, Britain, Greece, Asia, all have been suggested. Luke also was absent from Rome. Silas therefore was commissioned to take Peter's Epistle to all the churches of Roman Asia, many of them the ones he and Paul had visited some twenty years earlier. It is hard to resist the conclusion that Silas did undertake at this time a kind of final missionary journey over these lands, perhaps, for all we know, finishing at Antioch and there spending the final years of his life. He would by then be at least in his late sixties and perhaps more. *Jan Feb '91*

That the shadow of persecution was over the church is evident from his use of the symbolic term "Babylon" for Rome when he said in the verse "*the church that is at Babylon...saluteth you.*" (**1 Pet. 5. 13**). If the letter fell into the authorities' hands before Silas got clear away from Rome there would be nothing to incriminate the writer or his brethren. *Sept Oct '76*

While place we seek, or place we
shun,

The soul finds happiness in none,
But with our God to lead the way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay.

Poems of Dawn



For I the LORD thy God will
hold thy right hand, saying unto
thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

Isaiah 41. 13



When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'Tis said far down beneath the wild commotion
That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore.

Far, far beneath the noise of tempest dieth,
And silver waves chime over peacefully,
And no rude storm how fierce so e'er it flieth
Disturbs the sabbath of that deeper sea.

So to the heart that knows thy love, O Purest,
There is a temple sacred evermore,
And all the babble of life's angry voices
Dies in hushed silence at its peaceful door.

Far, far away the roar of passion dieth
And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully,
And no rude storm how fierce so e'er it flieth
Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in thee.

Harriet Beecher Stowe



JESUS is the PRINCE of PEACE.

He is ruler who goes before and blazes the trail which
leads to reconciliation of nations and tranquil, secure lives
for all peoples. JESUS says...Let my peace be in you. Let
my quiet ways conquer every warring faction in you. Let
this peace permeate your relationships and your prayers
for the nations...

At the Name of Jesus, Sarah Hornsby

Peace like a River.

In the midst of the storms through which we are passing we have peace, deep peace, too deep for any storms of earth to reach. In the world we have tribulation, but in Jesus we have peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Clouds overshadow us, but on every cloud we see calm sunshine resting. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my...righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. 48. 18). Those who hearken to the Lord, whose ears are attuned to His word will find their peace is like a river. It is not stagnant as a lake, nor tumultuous as the sea, but ever in calm motion, ever flowing on in its deep channel like a river. The course may sometimes be through rocks, sometimes through level plains, yet still it moves unhindered on. It may be night or day, it may be storm or calm, but it is there, flowing on till the embrace of the ocean receives it. Such is our peace, let us hold it fast.

Dec '45

NOTICES

**BIBLE STUDENTS SEMINAR DAY
SATURDAY 26 JANUARY 2019**

CRICK VILLAGE HALL

Bucknills Lane, Crick, Nr. Rugby, Northamptonshire
NN6 7SX

11 a.m.—5 p.m.

All Welcome

For information, please email nick.charcharos@btinternet.com

Or by post 12 Stanley Gardens, Tring, HP23 4BS

**BIBLE STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE 2019
FRIDAY 16—TUESDAY 20 AUGUST 2019**

Felden Lodge
Hertfordshire, England

Please note amended dates!

OUR COMFORT IN SORROW

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful. It tells of the Comforter; it points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our blessedness: it insists that all things are working together for good; it opens the vista of the blessed future, where all the griefs and tears shall be put away for ever.

Gone from us

Muriel Finnan (Warrington)
Margaret Nadal (Nottingham)

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