

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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You...children of God...shine as lights in the world. (Phil. 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

The word "light" in English carries differing definitions. It can be an object such as an electric light or a street light. It can also be described as the opposite of darkness as well as the opposite of heavy. In other analogies it can be used to represent truth as opposed to error.

In creation, the first reference to light comes as early as the third verse of the Bible when God said "Let there be light: and there was light". And so it was and he "called the light Day". We are later informed He provided the sun for a light by day and the moon and stars for a light by night. (Jer. 31. 35)

God is light. Jesus is light. The revelator, John, tells us that God is light. (1 John 1. 5) The very same disciple recorded the words of our Lord Jesus who said "I am the light of the world". Even John the Baptist is described as a light, a burning and shining light although in this case it properly means "lamp" rather than light as is clearly stated in the Diaglott. (John 5. 35)



The Bible is a light as the psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path". (Psalm 119. 105) This lamp has been luminating the world for thousands of years now and the books will be opened for many years to come if not forever.

Light as truth. Someone who has been falsely accused of a crime may say "let light be shone into the case" meaning when all the

full facts are made clear it will be obvious to all that he or she is innocent. Similarly the lies, deceit and treachery of Ziba were brought to light in the end in 2 Samuel for King David and Mephibosheth. It is in this form that light is recorded to bring out truth and dispel error. It is in such a form that Paul writes to the brethren in Corinth, Greece that God who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts. (2 Cor. 4. 6) In a similar way it seems Nicodemus who came by night saw the light, when understanding that Jesus was the Messiah by the time he took care of Jesus' dead body with Joseph of Arimathea.

We as lights. Matthew (5. 14) records what was told on the mount that the disciples were the light of the world. Also Paul describes the children of God in Philippi, Northern Greece as lights in the world. (Phil. 2. 15)

Therefore if we are lights what is our responsibility as lights? There are many things one could say but one action is to let our light shine that they may see our good works and glorify the heavenly Father. Another action is as we have opportunity do good unto all men especially the household of faith. (Matt. 5. 16; Gal. 6. 10) Other actions are to sing praises to him that hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. But this just scratches the surface.

This all leads us to realms of light when the faithful in Christ Jesus will be with him in heavenly realms when all the saints will be gathered home.

LIGHTS ALONG THE SHORE

A LIGHT shone out in the cold and dim.
 And a hope rose high where despair had been.
 And the danger passed in that trying hour,
 Though they never knew in the lighthouse tower.

Light enters the smallest opening accessible to it. It searches out the recesses that would otherwise remain dismal and dark, thus penetrating the gloom. It is a fact disclosed by science that it lays hold of the lurking germs of disease whether in the home or in the human system. Of Him it could not even stand in his presence.

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.

NICODEMUS

He came by night, a most unusual proceeding for any man in that day, least of all a public figure and a Pharisee. There was no night life in those times, not even in metropolitan Jerusalem. As soon as the sun disappeared below the horizon and the swift darkness descended, never much later than six o'clock, work ceased and all good men retired into their houses, barred their doors, and remained there until the morning. Only thieves and robbers and a few homeless beggars were to be found in the open after that, in walking through the silent streets in the dark, Nicodemus was taking a decided risk and his motives might well be questioned should he fall in with one of the city watchmen. And it was quite unnecessary; Jesus was always accessible and Nicodemus would have had no difficulty in effecting a meeting and conversation with him during daylight hours. But he came by night.

There would seem little doubt that Nicodemus did not want his contact with the prophet from Nazareth to come under the notice of his colleagues on the Sanhedrin, the highest ecclesiastical court in the land. He was not only a Pharisee but also a member of that august body and apparently held high office therein. For that very reason his movements and contacts would attract more notice than those of lesser men; much as he wanted to talk with Jesus he did not wish his interest to be generally known. The risks and inconvenience of a nocturnal visit did not weigh so heavily with him as the possible consequences of a day-time call. So he came by night.

It is not said of Nicodemus, as it was said of Joseph of Arimathea, that he was "*a disciple...but secretly for fear of the Jews,*" (John 19. 38). At this particular time he was not a disciple at all—still an enquirer. But his attitude was probably much the same as that of Joseph. Both were highly respected members of the ruling class and both had much to lose if their interest in or connection with the Galilean prophet became known—the High Priest, President of the Sanhedrin, would see to that. It might be felt, to the detriment of these two, that other prominent and influential men had openly shown their leaning to Jesus or espousal of his mission without taking any such precautions. Simon the Pharisee, Jairus the ruler of the synagogue, the centurion whose servant was healed, Joanna the wife of Chuza the steward of King Herod's court; all these made no secret of their association with Jesus. It is true, however, that all these were in Galilee or elsewhere, remote from Jerusalem, whereas Nicodemus and Joseph were in Jerusalem where the situation was markedly

different from that in the north. Perhaps we should not be too uncharitable towards Nicodemus in his caution and lack of faith.

Even so, the brief glimpses we have of him in the Gospels do seem to picture a man timid rather than confident, not at all sure about the prophet who had taken his interest, not inclined to risk his reputation and his position by an open avowal of discipleship, and yet conscious that there was something in the message which found a responsive chord in the thoughts of his own heart and bid fair (seems probably) to satisfy some of his own unanswered questions. In short, Nicodemus might well have been very much like so many of us, not favoured with the courage and persistence of a Paul nor yet the outspoken aggressiveness of a Peter, nevertheless desiring in our hearts that in all things we might be more like Christ and serve him all our days.

Two and a half years later Nicodemus was still not ready for an open avowal. When, at the Feast of Tabernacles six months before the Crucifixion, the Sanhedrin had sent the Temple guard in an ineffectual attempt to arrest Jesus, and sat debating their failure, his voice was raised in Jesus' defence but only in a mild and half-hearted manner. "*Doth our law judge any man*" he queried "*before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*" (John. 7. 51). Even that was too much for the arch-plotters. "*Art thou also of Galilee?*" they enquired sarcastically; "*Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet!*" In their arrogance they betrayed their ignorance of their own Scriptures, for at least one prophet, Jonah, did come from Gath-hepher in Galilee, and some of Israel's greatest heroes, like Barak and Gideon, arose from that part of the country. It was not until the final tragedy that Nicodemus roused himself sufficiently to pay belated honours to the Lord whom he undoubtedly revered, when he joined with Joseph of Arimathea in effecting the entombment of Jesus, so saving his body from the unceremonious treatment usually accorded to executed criminals. He took his stand then, regardless of consequences, for the priestly fraternity were not likely to overlook this deliberate act of honour to the man they sought by every possible means to vilify and discredit and eventually encompass his death. From that time and forward it is virtually certain that Nicodemus was numbered among the avowed believers in Christ now formed into a definite community under the leadership of the Twelve.

Despite this apparent early luke-warmness, there must have been something in Nicodemus which Jesus recognised as pure gold, something which, although overlaid with Pharisaic prejudices and inhibited by

reluctance to risk loss of standing in his own circle, was capable of responding to the Gospel, for to him Jesus imparted some of his most profound themes. Here in the record of the conversation between these two on that quiet night lie embedded some of the basic principles of the Divine call of this Age—what St. Paul was later to term the “High Calling of God in Christ Jesus”. It is probable that at first he saw Jesus only as a prophet, somewhat in the line of the Hebrew prophets of old, able like some of them to perform miracles of healing and the like, and imbued with a burning message of reproof and encouragement as were they. It is not likely that at first he connected Jesus with the Messiah for whose coming he, with all Jews, looked. But Jesus must have seen in him the seeds of what could afterwards flower into definite understanding and acceptance of his Messiahship and on this account told him things he admittedly could not understand at the time but assuredly did later on.

First of all came the Lord’s quiet insistence “*Ye must be born again*”. (John 3. 7) This theme has been taken up and made into a cardinal tenet by some sections of the Church and the expression “a born-again Christian” is by no means unknown today. Some renderings suggest that the meaning is really “born from above” and it is said that the Greek can bear either meaning. But really it means to be born afresh, anew, from a new beginning, in the same sense in which Paul (2 Cor. 5. 17) declares that if any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away and all things are become new. The idea behind the expression is that when one comes into Christ, by dedication or consecration of life to him, life commences anew by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit; this in Scripture is spoken of as being begotten or born of the Spirit to a new life in Christ, which comes to full birth, or maturity, at the resurrection into the heavenly realm to be with Christ. Nicodemus, of course, could make nothing of this; trained as he was in the legalistic formulae of the Mosaic Law he could visualise the consummation of the Divine purpose only in terms of a reformed and righteous Israel maintaining that Law in its entirety and so claiming the right to rule the nations as predicted by the prophets. The idea of a rebirth into a new kind of life and another world, the spiritual, was quite foreign to him and he could make nothing of it.

By way of leading his thinking into right paths Jesus then indicated that something more than the Mosaic Law was necessary for entrance into eternal life. Nicodemus was familiar with the baptism by water—John the Baptist’s call to repentance and ceremonial cleansing, with its attendant immersion in water as symbol of that cleansing, was well known to him and he might even himself have submitted to baptism at the hands of John

and counted himself in full accord with God's purposes thereby. But Jesus had to tell him this was not enough, he must go on from repentance and sincerity to a full yielding of self to Christ, association with him in all that He stood for, full consecration of life and talents and all to his service, in expectation of eternal union with him in the life to come. So, said Jesus, he must be baptised, not only by water, but also by the Spirit, to come into that relationship with God. "*Except a man be born of water AND of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*". (John 3. 5) It is possible that Nicodemus could not make much of this either, at least at that time in his experience; it is certainly true that many who have sincerely accepted Christ in times since have never come to that understanding, and their Christian lives have been lived on the level of acceptance of his teaching and ethics, but not on that of unity and association with him.

The third important principle followed naturally from the first two but it had to be defined. There are two natures, fleshly and spiritual, and two worlds, terrestrial and celestial. Nicodemus knew only of one, and until he could be made aware of the other he would never enter into a real understanding of Jesus' mission and the call of the Gospel. "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" (John 3. 8). The wind as an illustration of the power of the invisible Spirit is apt enough, but in fact Jesus does not seem to have been talking about the wind. This is the only occasion out of three hundred and seventy occurrences in the New Testament where "*pneuma*" is translated "wind". In all other cases it is "spirit". In fact the Greek word for "wind" is "*anemos*" and so occurs thirty-one times. "Bloweth" is better "breatheth" and "sound" is "voice" (*phone*). What Jesus really said to Nicodemus was "the Spirit breatheth where it desires and thou hearest its voice, but canst not tell..." etc. Nicodemus was accustomed to trusting in the mechanical righteousness conferred by observance and sacrifice, the vision of God seen in the miracles and outward works and material evidences of Divine power. Jesus had to tell him that none of these things had any place in the world of the spirit, that good as they were in their own sphere, there was another in which the power of the Spirit was the motive force, the voice of the Spirit the channel of instruction, the world of the Spirit the ultimate goal, and only the spiritual senses could be receptive to these things. Just as his earthly mind and body was attuned and adapted to this terrestrial sphere, so by the power of the Spirit manifested in a new birth and new life must he expect a new mind and, eventually, a new body attuned and adapted to the celestial. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is*

spirit.” (v. 6)

And, of course, Nicodemus comprehended nothing of all this. “*How can these things be?*” (v. 9) he asked helplessly. Came the grave and mildly reproachful reply “*Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*” (v. 10) Far less learned and educated men than he, fishermen and peasants and tax collectors, were already in a fair way to understanding, but that was because these had given themselves to Jesus and devoted their lives to him. Nicodemus knew too much of the Mosaic Law, too much of the traditions of the Talmud, too much of the wisdom of this world, easily to comprehend and accept what Jesus was saying. His superior position and knowledge became a handicap when he came into contact with the world of the Spirit.

So Jesus shifted his vantage ground and talked of other things, of faith, of belief, and the love of God which led to the sending of his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life because God sent him not to condemn the world but to save it. And he who believes has life already. Far removed was all this from the old theology of Judaism, but perhaps it was in all this that Nicodemus saw the light. We do not know, we are not told, what was the immediate outcome, or in what state of mind Nicodemus wended his way home through the streets that eventful night. But the fact that Jesus took so much trouble with him and talked with him on such profound themes, and perhaps not least that the story is recorded in such detail for the benefit of future generations, maybe justifies the inference that Jesus saw in this man’s mind something which He knew would one day blossom into full discipleship. Perhaps, after all, it did need the miracle of the Resurrection to clarify all the doubts and perplexities and make Nicodemus God’s man for ever, as it did with James and others. Then, if not before, came full illumination on the quiet words spoken by Jesus to the questing man who came to him by night.

AOH



In service that his love supplies
 There are no bonds for me,
 For my inner heart is taught the truth
 That makes his children free;
 And a life of self-renouncing love
 Is a life of liberty.

songs of the nightingale
Harvest Activities

REPENTANCE, CONSECRATION, BAPTISM

“Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” (Matthew 3. 15)

For some months John the Baptist had been engaged in his mission as the forerunner of Jesus, preaching: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Many in Israel had come to Jordan to be baptised of him, thereby giving a witness of their repentance of the sins which they, as members of God’s covenanted people, had committed under the Law Covenant made at Sinai. Then Jesus came requesting water immersion at John’s hands. (Matt. 3. 13-17).

The Baptist was amazed at the desire of the holy Jesus to be baptised by him, and expressed his reluctance to comply with the request of the Saviour. We read: “John forbid Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?” The reply of our Lord to John’s expostulation (kindly protest) is contained in our text. Jesus revealed in these words to John that it was God’s will that He should be immersed. “Then he (John) suffered Him.”

The baptism of Jesus was not for remission of sin, for He had no sin. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7. 26) and was the One “Who knew no sin”. As He had committed no sin of which He had to repent, no witness by water immersion was necessary; yet He knew that for Him to do the Father’s will He must be immersed by John.

Why was Jesus baptised? It was the witness to His consecration to do the will of God which ultimately meant His death on the Cross. The will of God for Him, as was subsequently revealed, was that He should take the sinner’s place and die as an offering for sin, thereby redeeming the condemned race of Adam.

As John immersed Jesus in the Jordan, it symbolized His entire submission to the will of God which finally resulted in His death. This was of His own volition, the giving Himself as a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (Matt. 20. 28; 1 Tim. 2. 3-6).

Our Lord’s earthly experience from Jordan to Calvary culminated on the Cross when He cried: “It is finished”. After being in the tomb for parts of three days the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the mighty power of God. The resurrection of our Lord was shown in the symbol of His baptism, when John raised Him from under the water of the Jordan.

The followers of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot give themselves as a ransom for the sinner race; this mighty work was completed by the Saviour. Nevertheless we are called by God to follow in the steps of the Master; and as He fulfilled all the will of His Father, so must we conform to God's will as He reveals it to us.

We believe, therefore, that the Saviour left us an example, and by following in His steps, we should give the witness of our consecration to God in precisely the same way as He did.

Water baptism was taught and practised by Jesus during His ministry on earth. (John 4. 1-2). It was also observed by the Apostles and the early Church; the record of the Acts of the Apostles shows this.

The Pentecostal sermon preached by the Apostle Peter concluded with an appeal to his hearers: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2. 38).

The result of Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God in the city of Samaria, was that many "were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8. 12). When Philip, by the aid of the Holy Spirit had joined himself to the Ethiopian eunuch and had preached Jesus to him by expounding the prophecy of Isaiah 53, we read that the eunuch desired to be baptized, and Philip replied to his request: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The eunuch responded: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Then Philip immersed him in water, and Philip being caught away by the Spirit, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8. 35-39).

Saul of Tarsus, when converted into the Apostle Paul, was baptised. When Peter had obeyed the Divine command and had witnessed concerning Jesus to Cornelius and his household, they were all baptised in the name of the Lord. (Acts 9. 17-18; 10. 44-48). The Apostle Paul also practised water immersion of Christian converts (Acts 18. 8; 1 Cor. 1. 16).

The Gospel proclaimed by Jesus Christ and the Apostles announced God's command to all men to repent. (Matt. 4. 17; Acts 17. 30). No creature has a right to sin; it is rebellion against God; and since the first advent of Christ, the command has gone forth to the sinner to repent. This command of God must be obeyed by all who would gain everlasting life through the sacrifice of the Saviour. Some hear the injunction of God to

repent of sin in the preaching of the Gospel during this present life, and being drawn of God (John 6. 37,44) respond to the Divine command. Such give their heart to the Lord in consecration, and receiving the Holy Spirit are begotten to the hope of the resurrection from the dead, and if they are faithful to their Lord they will experience the first resurrection and share the Lord's glory in the realms of light.

The residue of mankind will have to obey the command of the Creator to repent, if they desire to enjoy the blessings of restitution, which will be offered to each member of the human race, during the reign of Christ with His Church over the earth during the Millennial Age.

Repentance of sin implies deep sorrow for sins of the past and a complete turning from sin to serve righteousness. All who do this during the present age are drawn by God to Jesus as the Saviour and in Him, all such have revealed God's great love for mankind (John 3. 16-17).

It is the revelation of the love of God in Christ that draws the heart to Him, and we are constrained to reciprocate the Divine love by giving ourselves in consecration to God. (2 Cor. 4. 6; 5. 1-17). He loved us first and we respond to this love by devoting ourselves to Him. (1 John 4. 9,10,19).

The covenant of consecration, or giving our hearts to the Lord, is between ourselves and God alone, and the Bible reveals that having taken this step, we are begotten of the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught this when conversing with Nicodemus (John 3. 1-15). "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This is the Christian's earnest of eternal life.

The Apostle Paul in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans expounds the significance of consecration to God as baptism into Christ. This is the real baptism of which water immersion is the symbol and witness. (Romans 6. 1-5). The teaching here is that those who have given their hearts to the Lord in consecration have died to sin; and that like as Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, so the Christian should walk in newness of life. He here refers to the Christian having died to sin and from henceforth experiencing the newness of life, the resurrection power in the life.

The resurrection power in the Christian life is the result of the rich indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and this will produce the fruit of righteous-

ness unto holiness, for without holiness shall no man see the Lord. (Hebrews 12. 14).

God has made full provision for our holiness in the Cross of Christ; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; our union with Christ; our Lord's present ministry for His people; the Bible, the Word of God; the creation of the new man; the discipline of our Father, and the second coming of Christ when the Church will be glorified and enter into the glorious work of blessing of all mankind. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ through His cross, our union with Him, His present ministry for us and His glorious return, provides all needed grace for our living for Him.

Our Christian life will be seen by all with whom we come in contact. We shall, "as we have...opportunity, ...do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," (Gal. 6. 10) and keeping the Divine commandments will follow the Lamb whithersoer He goeth.

The Forest Gate Church Bible Monthly

TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE—A HYMN

*Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord to Thee;*

*Take my silver and my gold—
Not a mite would I withhold;*

*Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my intellect, and use
Ev'ry power as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;*

*Take my will, and make it Thine—
It shall be no longer mine:*

*Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my heart—it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;*

*Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store;*

*Take my lips, and let them be
Fill'd with messages from Thee.*

*Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, ALL for Thee.*

Alexander's Hymns No. 3.

This is one of the most treasured hymns of Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879) that has stayed the test of time since her death about 140 years ago. She wrote it in 1873 in 11 stanzas of two lines to which a twelfth was added.

The following verses could have inspired the writer;

2 Chron. 29. 31 Hezekiah...said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD...the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings.

Isaiah 6. 8 I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Philippians 1. 20-21 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Romans 12. 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

Luke 21. 2-3 He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.

Philippians 3. 14-16 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

1 Peter 4. 1-2 As Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Psa. 40. 8 I delight to do thy will, O my God:...thy law is within my heart.

Matt. 6. 20 Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

John 21. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Common tunes for it are Hendon and Nottingham (Mozart). Hymnary.org reckons that the writer could have selected her father's tune Patmos.

CHOSEN IN HIM

These words appear in the Ephesians 1. 4. The first question to ask is “To whom was the Apostle Paul writing”?

When you hear the postman knock followed by the sound of several letters dropping on the floor do you immediately pick them up and open them or do you look at the address on the envelopes? I must confess that I usually look at the address but nevertheless have not always done so which on one occasion led to an embarrassing situation. Fortunately the intended recipient was most understanding and my apologies quickly waived aside.

Here the Epistle was addressed to the “saints” and “faithful in Christ Jesus”. Other Epistles were not so addressed. But just as a letter addressed to us can contain information of interest and maybe of importance to someone else so also can a letter addressed to someone else contain information for now. Peter, for instance, addresses his first epistle to “the Sojourners of the Dispersion” (Diaglott) referring to believers amongst the scattered Israelites, but here are some of the statements which are so important, so meaningful and so comforting. James similarly addresses “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad”. Even Paul on occasions addresses the “Ecclesias” (Diaglott) as for instance at Corinth and Galatia.

But here there is none of that. Just “saints and faithful” and the question is “Does this expression refer to us?” Some may say something like ‘I think it refers to a class, but whether I am in that class I cannot say’.

There are some believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are not unduly interested in Paul’s later Epistles, which were written whilst in prison especially this one so-called to the Ephesians. Some of these would even say that they prefer the Corinthian epistles with their emphasis upon the gifts of the Spirit. This Epistle is loved because it speaks to us of such high and holy things, such deep and wonderful things which the heart of man could never conceive.

It is a pity that the understanding of the word “saint” still suffers from the errors of Catholic Theology. Depicted as one dressed in a long flowing robe, usually with a holier than thou facial expression and a halo around the head, usually given this title for the works done and often for allegiance to the doctrine of Rome. The “saints” addressed here are such because of what **God** has done and are made such by the call of God,

although there is a manner of life that “becometh” saints. (Eph. 1. 4; Eph. 5. 3-5).

It is also said of these “saints” that they were “faithful” or “full of faith” and the word is sometimes translated “believing” so that in John 20. 27 it says “Be not faithless, but believing”. It is said in 1 Cor. 4. 2 that “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”, that is not only believing what God says but faithful in proclaiming it, holding it as a stewardship before God, and such were the saints addressed here.

Again “Does this expression refer to us?” Most have faced up to the truth of Rom. 6. Reckoning ourselves dead unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, having been baptized into his death. There is no outward change in the flesh, but just believe it is a fact because the Holy Spirit of God has brought conviction into our souls. God has transferred us out of Adam (from whom we all received our natural life in this world) into Christ from whom is derived that spiritual life of the Ages.

So here is the answer to the question. As long as we believe we...are... some of the saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus, to whom Paul addresses this Epistle. Nevertheless, alas, it is undoubtedly true that many very dear Christians, perhaps unconsciously turned their backs or closed their eyes to the truths of Romans 6 etc... think it a kind of presumption to take those words in verse 1 to themselves. Maybe through excessive introspection or prolonged bodily weakness and affliction or through presenting a listening ear to the subtle attacks of the Adversary and saying in effect, that having begun in the Spirit they are to be made perfect in the flesh, such are putting themselves back under law and are therefore not free to enjoy the wonderful truths of this Epistle.

As believing, then, that we are some of the saints and faithful IN Christ Jesus let us just take a look at this expression “In Christ Jesus”. In verse 4 we are “chosen in Him” (vv. 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13). It is all “IN HIM” and outside this chapter or even this Epistle there are many more examples.

So in verse 4 we are told that God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. What a tremendous statement this is. Let us notice first of all that this expression “before the foundation of the world” differs considerably from another expression often used in Scripture “from the foundation of the world”. Things which took place or decisions which were made before a new Government in this country was formed could be quite different from those after it was formed. The former term

although used elsewhere being particularly applicable to this Epistle it is certainly significant and, a study of the two terms is most rewarding.

But before going any further let us just take a look at this word “foundation” as used in the A.V. The usual Greek word translated “foundation” is *themelio* as in Eph. 2. 20 “the foundation of the apostles and prophets” and also 1 Cor. 3. 10 and 2 Tim. 2. 19 and in Heb. 1. 10 “Thou...hast laid the foundation of the earth”.

But the word used here in verse 4 and all the other passages where the words “before” or “from” the foundation of the world occur a totally different word—“*kataboles*”—is used, which carries the meaning of “casting down”, “overthrow” or “disruption”. Therefore some time after the world was created it was subjected to a tremendous catastrophe, a theory which more and more scientists are coming around to believe, because of geological finds etc... and which was maybe of Satanic origin. It was, then, even before this overthrow of the world that we were chosen in Christ.

Christ was with the Father and was daily His delight before the world was. (Prov. 8. 30) In that High Priestly prayer our Lord Jesus says to His Father “Thou lovedst me before the foundation (or overthrow for it is the same word “*kataboles*”) of the world”. (John 17. 24) Now, in this epistle was revealed for the first time by the Apostle Paul that great secret previously hid in God of a joint body, the Head in heaven and the members of His body chosen from the Adamic race here on earth for a time whilst “in spirit” seated together with Him in the “heavenlies” until such time as they shall be with Him in reality, their bodies of humiliation transformed and made like unto His body of glory.

How wonderful all this is. And how otherwise could it be so than by being IN CHRIST, for later in this verse 4 it is in order that “we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” The truth is this takes us back to a time before Adam was created, let alone the temptation and the fall. In 2 Timothy 1. 9 Paul tells us it was before *aionian* times. (Diaglott)

Consequently upon God having chosen us in Christ He has also blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places as we are told in verse 3. This expression “in heavenly places” which is a translation of the Greek “*en tois epouranios*” occurs five times in Ephesians as the Diaglott shows but nowhere else in the whole of Scripture.

It is true that the word “heavenly” (Greek *epouranios*) occurs quite often, for we read of “Heavenly Father”, “heavenly gift” etc... but here and elsewhere it is used of the place of origin or of character. Even in the case of the “Heavenly Jerusalem” as it says of it coming down from God out of heaven but we do not read of it ever going back. With the fuller expression, however whatever is spoken of is “IN heaven”.

The five references of “*en tois epouraniois*” are:-

1. Our spiritual blessings are in heaven (1. 3)
2. Christ is seated at the right hand of God in Heavenly places (1. 20)
3. We are (in spirit) seated with Him in Heavenly places (2. 6)
4. We are a spectacle unto principalities and powers in heavenly places (3. 10)
5. Therefore our conflict is with these principalities and powers which are in these heavenly places (6 .12 margin)

So we are called upon to believe (as the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus) that God has chosen us, in Christ, before the overthrow of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love and (only “in Christ” could we possibly be that) and only “in Christ” all spiritual blessings—where?—in the heavenlies.

All have a sense of unworthiness especially when considering the holiness of our great God. We wouldn't love the Lord if that were not true? And as we try to “comprehend...what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ” (Eph. 3. 18-19) as Paul says, the mind boggles and we are lost in wonder, love and praise. The purpose of it all is “that we should be to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1. 12,14). We have merited nothing, for all is by grace and not of works. Surely it must call forth our praise.

*Sing of the wonderful story,
sing of the word of His grace,
Unto the praise of His glory,
He giveth poor sinners a place.
Now bless'd with all blessings
in Christ who is seated above
Accepted in the Beloved, holy
and blameless in love.*

*Sing of God's wonderful purpose
which in His Word is made known,
Chosen in Christ unto sonship,
before the world was o'erthrown
Oh! Wonderful glory, angels
might envy the place
Given to us Gentile sinners,
saved and made meet by His grace.*

It is not of works because all is by grace. Nevertheless that we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”.

There is really no difficulty and certainly no contradiction here—"not of works"—"unto good works." Good works done in order to earn salvation are quite different from works done after we have salvation. The former are works of the law the latter works of grace, and the law was brought in by Israel's defection, their presumption and self-conceit.

The story of the Pharisee and the Publican illustrates this very well. Saul was a learned, clever and resourceful man, but he was also a firebrand. "Give me another law to keep and I will keep it" was his attitude of mind. Arraigned by God on the Damascus Road blinded and made helpless he was made to see that he could do nothing, and it needed a long period of training before God could use him and manifest through him the good works which He had ordained he should do.

Then again how different were his works before conversion to those after. Before conversion they were more akin to the mandate given to Jeremiah "to pluck up and destroy" but after conversion to "plant and to build" Jeremiah's other mandate. In the latter Paul became gentle, as a nurse with her children, enduring afflictions, exercising patience and long-suffering and could even tell his beloved brethren to be "followers of me, even as I...am of Christ" and "those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, DO." All because he knew that "God" was working in him "to will and to do of His good pleasure", which was, to perform the good works which God had before ordained he should do. (1 Cor. 11. 1; Phil. 4. 9; Phil. 2. 13)

Let's rest in our allotment as seated together with Christ in the heavenlies and the sting is taken out of any taunts which the Adversary may make. Look at things from God's point of view, remembering that His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways (Isa. 55. 8). Remembering that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; the weak things to confound the things that are mighty; the base things and things that are despised. (1 Cor. 1. 27-28) It is by choosing such that He can make known through them to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies His "manifold wisdom" (Eph. 3. 10).

There is a story in the O.T. which gives a lovely picture of this unmerited and unearned favour shown to one for another's sake. It is found in 2 Samuel 9. In verse 1 King David asks if there is anyone left of the house of Saul that he may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake. "Yes" said Ziba, Saul's servant "He has a son, Mephibosheth". This young man was dropped by his nurse when he was five as she fled on hearing of the death

of Saul and Jonathan. (2 Sam. 4. 4) So he was certainly limited in what he could do. Moreover he was born of the rebellious house of Saul, and called himself a “dead dog” and when David sent and fetched him they found him at Lodebar which means “no bread” or “no pasture”. As such he is typical of us far-off Gentiles “having no hope, and without God in the world”. (Eph. 2. 11-13)

But, behold the miracle. The king calls for him. “Mephibosheth—Fear not”. The first thing Jesus does is to take away our fear. “Fear not”, (v. 7) David says “for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake...and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually” and it means “continually” for verse 11 adds “as one of the king’s sons”. So Paul tells us that God has adopted us as His own sons, so God found us and sent His spirit into our hearts, just as this young man was sent for and fetched, accepted in the Beloved, forgiven for Christ’s sake so we have been seated together with His only begotten Son in the Heavenlies.

We are, in ourselves, quite unworthy, just like that poor young man. “What is thy servant” he asks “that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?” (v. 8) But he didn’t turn away. He didn’t reject the proffered blessing and return to his own home of “no-bread”. He gazed with love upon the king and then bowed in reverence and no doubt with his heart full of joy accepted the position and honour that was freely given to him, and we are called upon to do the same. Because the soul of David had been knit to the soul of Jonathan, and they were as one, so in his death. David showed kindness to another of his family. Thus does our Father, for Christ’s sake and since His death look upon us and accepts us as “in Him”. All this then was the joy of Mephibosheth as he sat at the king’s table, day after day, gazing upon the king who we are told was “ruddy, and...of a beautiful countenance, goodly to look to”, (1 Sam. 16. 12) and a man after God’s own heart. (Acts 13. 22) No doubt Mephibosheth took a pride in his appearance then.

But there came a time when Mephibosheth’s loyalty was to be tested as inevitably ours is likewise. The story is told when subsequently Absalom, David’s son, rebelled against him and stole the hearts of the men of Israel causing David to flee into exile with his faithful followers. David’s sufferings at this time were probably the worst he ever had to endure. But where is Mephibosheth? This is what David wants to know and asks the question of Mephibosheth’s servant, Ziba whom he met as he was fleeing and who had brought David presents of two asses and ample provisions. Why wasn’t he beware of such gifts and exercise better judgment? For in

the heart of Ziba was black deceit. “A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment” (Prov. 17. 23) Perhaps, after all there were reasons and in any case David was in great extremity.

However, he told David that Mephibosheth remained in Jerusalem and added he had said “Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father”. (2 Sam. 16. 3) What a slander. Far from it being true, whilst the city of Jerusalem rejoiced at David’s flight Mephibosheth would have none of it. He kept himself separate and mourned for the king who had come to mean so much to him. Yet David gave to his deceiving and slanderous servant all his property to such an extent his true judgment had been warped.

But behold the sequel to it all, which carries such a beautiful lesson. The day came when David was received as king in Jerusalem and all the lies, all the treachery and all the deceit was brought to light. 2 Samuel 19. 24-30 records how throughout the time of the king’s absence Mephibosheth remained loyal to him. If he was denied the presence and gazing upon that lovely countenance then he cared not to seek the approval of any who had rejected him and caused him to flee. He couldn’t forget what he was by birth and what the king had done for him. Neither should it be forgotten what we are in Adam and what God has made us to be in Christ. What a devoted person Mephibosheth was. Property and a claim to possession in the land? What is that to me? The king has returned. In this does my heart rejoice. I am satisfied.

We too have been chosen—chosen in Christ because we have been and are loved by the Father, chosen to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Why should we mind then if we have not been allotted an inheritance in a restored earth, nor yet it maybe in the Heavenly Jerusalem for we can rejoice in the knowledge that we shall be to the praise of His glory and when Christ shall appear then shall we also appear with Him in the highest reality of glory—and be satisfied then.

JS

E’en sorrow, touched by heaven, grows bright
 With more than rapture’s ray,
 As darkness shows us worlds of light
 We never saw by day.

Poems of Dawn

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

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

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

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

We tend to view our Christian life from too intellectual a viewpoint. Even our entrance thereinto is carefully prescribed for us in technical terms; repentance, justification, consecration, sanctification, glorification; and too often the whole matter is presented to the immature believer as though he is invited to enter into a commercial agreement with God. Cold as ice, and about as inviting! And all the time we are conscious—or ought to be conscious—of the warm, vibrant words *“Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not...a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”* (Heb. 10. 5; Psalm 51. 17)

This is the source from which we must get the oil for the light, the virtue for the salt, the power to raise that city to its elevation on the hill; here, at the foot of the Cross, where repentance and determination, contrition and hope, renunciation and consecration, go hand in hand. Not in the emotionless formalism of the detached acceptance of a cold invitation “if ye do *this*...I will give you *that*” but in the spontaneous, eager realisation of tender, compassionate tones “My son, give me thine heart...who will go for us?”, lies the power that will make us to “shine forth as the sun” here and now in the sight of all men. In that experience, and that alone, shall we realise what was in the mind of the “beloved physician”, Luke, when he beheld the fellowship of the Early Church and wrote of them, “*Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*” (Acts 2. 47) Is it any accident that those two phrases are associated so intimately together?

AOH



No need of the sun in the city to come,
The light of the world is Jesus;
All nations shall walk in the light of the Lamb;
The light of the world is Jesus.

John's Gospel begins with the announcement that the life of Jesus is the true light in the darkness to enlighten every man who receives Him. JESUS says...How bold and attractive is a candle shining in a dark room. I shine in you. I burn in you so that those who still walk in darkness can see Me and be drawn to Me. Do not quench or cover the flame.

Jesus spoke to them again saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

John 8. 12 NKJV

*At the Names of Jesus
Sarah Hornsby*

PRAYER AND THE BIBLE

Part 14

The Revealmnt of Contests in the Spirit Realm

There is an influence connected with, or emanating from, prayer, which overcomes the resistance exerted by evil spirit beings. The disciples rejoiced when they perceived that the demons were subject to them through Jesus' name. (Luke 9. 1; 10. 17,20) There is record of one prominent instance, however, where an evil spirit defied their authority; and it is important to consider what Jesus replied when asked to explain the cause of this failure.

We remind ourselves of the origin and history of the demons. These invisible beings are the angels, the "sons of God," who sinned in the days that were before the deluge. They kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation; and materializing co-mingled with mankind. Therefore God, when bringing in the flood upon the old world of the ungodly, cast them into "Tartarus," that is, the earth's super incumbent atmosphere, there delivering them into "chains of darkness" to be reserved unto judgment. (See 1 Pet. 3. 18-20; 2 Pet. 2. 4; Jude 6; Gen. 6. 2) These fallen angels or demons (misnamed "devils" in the Authorized Version) are frequently referred to in the Scriptures. They "possess" men; and through spiritualistic mediums they impersonate the dead, thus bolstering up Satan's lie that the dead live, and denying the truth of God's Holy Word. (Psa. 6. 5; 115. 17; 146. 4; Eccl. 9. 5,10; Job 14. 21) Under the law of Moses the act of communing with such as had "familiar spirits" (mediums) was punishable with death.—Lev. 19. 31; 20. 6,27; Deut. 18. 9-14; 1 Chron. 10. 13,14; Isa. 8. 19

As our Lord Jesus had authority to exorcise the demons, and as he delegated the like power to his disciples, it is clear that they have, and do still, hinder the establishment of God's will among men. The host of unclean spirits must be driven forth from their illicit control, before the world can have freedom to experience the blessings of Christ's reign. For this reason we take cognizance of Jesus' reply to the anxious question of his disciples regarding their inability to cast out a certain demon—"He said unto them, 'This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer.'" (Mark 9. 17-29) It was of a particularly malignant and tenacious order, defiant of those who, weak in faith, lacked the requisite authority from God. Hence the necessity for prayer, that the unseen power of the Almighty should enforce the word of command, and compel the evil spirit to obey.

Jesus had just descended from the mount of transfiguration, where he had

been in communion with God by prayer, when he performed this miracle. The Scriptures inform us that it was “as he prayed” that his wonderful transfiguration came. (Luke 9. 29) “The fashion of his countenance was altered,” we read; and when afterwards he drew near to the multitude at the foot of the mountain the people were greatly amazed, and running up could not forbear saluting him. (Mark 9. 15) The dumb and deaf spirit was powerless to resist the behest of Jesus, on whom the might and majesty of God had come in response to his fervent prayer of faith in the mount. (2 Pet. 1. 16-18) The fallen angels knew Jesus, as also they know his followers; and the spiritual potency of the sacrificing spirit begotten sons of God causes them distress.—Matt. 8. 29; Luke 8. 31; Acts 16. 16-18; 19. 13-17

The individual energies of the “firstborn,” whose names are written in heaven, are not now to be directed so much against those demons in close intimacy with humanity (the “foul spirits,” and “familiar spirits,” are in all probability of the lower order of the adversary’s invisible minions), but against the keener, directing intelligences in Satan’s kingdom of darkness. These higher spiritual “governments, authorities, and powers” of the evil one are intent upon disarranging the orderly working of Jehovah’s Plan of Salvation, and with seeking by “crafty ways” to divert from the main purpose the unique spiritual power of God’s people. (Eph. 6. 10-12) The Apostle therefore urges us to put on the whole “armour” of God, and then to *pray with all prayer*. (Eph. 6. 18) It is evident from Paul’s words that we who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, embryo spirit beings, must have that special spiritual protection likened to armour, that we may be impervious to the attacks of the enemy. Thus equipped we stand in security while, by prayer, we establish every feature of our heavenly Father’s will, and thus undermine and in due time cause the complete ruin of the stronghold of the god of this world.

The organized efforts of Satan to thwart God’s great Plan by openly destroying the Bible, counteracting its holy influence through misrepresentations, or boldly raising obstacles to its study among those who desire its direct instruction and guidance, have proved futile in face of the vigilant prayers of the faithful children of God. The Scriptures have therefore been preserved throughout the centuries; and the details of the Plan when revealed and noted have been fulfilled in answer to prayer according to the Divine arrangement. (Matt. 9. 36-38) When his subtle machinations fail, the adversary often seeks by violence to prevent the effectual prayer of faith from ascending to God. He will even intercept the Divinely appointed spirit messengers, in an endeavour to disorder the Plan of the Almighty.—Jude 9

The tenth chapter of Daniel furnishes us with an indication of how our continuous petitioning to the heavenly throne may ensure the victory. If we ponder the things recorded in this portion of the Word of God, we shall perceive here the slight raising of the veil, momentarily showing the nature of those contentions for and against Jehovah which obtain in the spirit realm.

We read that Daniel, in order to acquire understanding of his important vision, prayed to God, and persisted therein three full weeks until the desired revelation was granted. The angel (Gabriel) who was sent from the heavenly courts in response to Daniel's pleadings, explained to him that; "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I left him there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."*(vv. 12-14 AV & RSV) Then, after giving Daniel the elucidation of the vision, the angel continued: "Knowest thou wherefore I am come unto thee? And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince."*(vv. 20-21)

Michael is our Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-human existence, the Archangel or chief of all God's spirit agencies, the prince whom Jehovah appointed when dealing with His covenanted people Israel. The prince of the heathen nation of Persia, who so boldly hindered the angel Gabriel for twenty-one days until Michael intervened and engaged him in battle, can have been none other than Satan. For the evil one was aware that the explanatory message entrusted by God to Gabriel, and which was to be unfolded to the beloved Daniel in answer to his earnest prayer, was in reality a prophetic history of the outstanding features of the future Gentile

*NOTE: The word "remained" in verse 13 of the tenth chapter of Daniel, as given in the Authorized Version, is not the correct reading of the Hebrew original—see Rotherham's translation which has the rendering: "left him"; that is, Gabriel left Michael to fight the prince of Persia, while he continued on his journey to the praying Daniel to whom he delivered his message. This message is detailed in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel. The division of the narrative into chapters in the Authorized Version tends to obscure its continuity. The entire record from chapter 10 to the end of the book is more clearly followed in the modern English translations by Rotherham, and by Fenton. For a satisfactory exposition of Daniel's prophetic visions, as well as of the general Biblical Plan of God, we especially direct attention to Studies in the Scriptures by the Charles Russell.

dominion, wherein was revealed the uprising of the Antichrist, Satan's masterpiece. The Devil undoubtedly "sensed" danger in this far-reaching revelation, even if he was unable to comprehend its exact meaning, and hence his efforts to hold it back in the hope that Daniel might through faintness cease his petitioning, and thus break the necessary prayerful attitude.

Because of the steadfastness of this servant of God, we of the Gospel Age are enabled to discern in the angel's explanation the successive steps by which Satan brought into active operation his lying counterfeit of Christ's glorious Millennial reign of righteousness. By the carefully arranged details of this revelation, also, we can follow the appointed times and seasons, and perceive that the fall of Satan's empire is sure, and was foreknown by the great Jehovah. For it was not so much for his own immediate benefit that Daniel was granted the answer to his prayer (he was told he must wait till the end of the days), but rather for the Lord's spiritual children who live at the close of the long period of the Gentile lease of power, that these might intelligently cooperate with Him in the establishment of the promised fifth universal empire, or Kingdom of Christ.

We perceive the truth of the Apostle's declaration that our fight is not truly against "flesh and blood"; for men are at present under the control of the evil spirit powers, and are not the primary enemies. (2 Cor. 4. 4) Our mission is to undeceive the world, and through the Divine instruction confer upon it the blessings of everlasting life and freedom. This the saints of God shall do in the power of the coming spiritual Kingdom, for the establishment of which they are now in conflict with the Satanic rulers in the heavenlies. This Holy War still proceeds, but the triumph of the "little flock" of spirit begotten "children of the Kingdom" is promised. (Luke 12. 32) By God's wonderful provision our prayers of faith can be enlisted to gain the cause of the Lord in this invisible contest.

Let not the reproach of our loving Master fall upon us: "O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" On the contrary, even when everything is dark, and the accomplishment of our heavenly Father's gracious and beneficent purposes seems improbable to the doubting world, let *us* continually remember these trustful words in the beautiful prayers of the Levites, and of David and Solomon: "Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein,

and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.” “There is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.” “Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.”—Neh. 9. 5-6; 1 Kings 8. 23; 1 Chron. 29. 11-13

We all desire our prayers to be vitally effective; and if we pay heed to the instructions of God’s Holy Word we know they shall be. There is one closing instruction added by our Lord, which is of deep significance: “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” *Amen.*

ME

God’s Safe Holding

(Psa. 119. 17)

Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

Hold Thou me up, in Christ in heavenly places,
To view my life from that triumphant height,
So shall my soul grow strong with patient
courage

To run the race and wage the daily fight.
How light and brief the present conflict seemeth,
And short the way to that eternal rest,
When eyes of faith gaze smiling from the shelter
Of Love’s safe holding to my Saviour’s breast.

Hold Thou me up, in Christ with full dominion
O’er my weak flesh and subtle self-desire,
Spurning each snare, sweet-baited by the
Tempter,
Guarding my robe from spot of earthly mire.
Held by Thy power, no darkness can confound
me,

Not haunting fears my trusting heart alarm,
Thy grace and strength are perfected in
weakness,

And none can pluck me from Thy `circling arm.

Hold Thou me up in Christ, my righteous
cov’ring,

Till crowned immortal I in glory shine;
For now I live through His life pulsing in me,
As lives the branch by dwelling in the vine.
Father, I yield in grateful heart-submission
To Thy keen blade of purging pain and woe;
Prune as Thou wilt, and perfect love’s fruition:
From luscious grapes sweet wine of joy will
flow.

Hold Thou me up, in Christ a living member,
Swift to obey the promptings of His will,
My words and deeds His mind alone expressing
As I with joy my task of love fulfill.

If I would reign with Him, a king in glory,
Here I must share His sacrifice and shame,
So, Father, help me bear the cross with Jesus
Till life will end in praise to Thy dear name.

Minna Edgar

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

9. The Hope of Israel

Chapter 10 is a continuation of the latter part of chapter 9 in that the vision of Christ who comes to conquer the world by love and persuasion in contrast to his predecessor Alexander the Greek who attempted to do so by force, and failed, goes into its culmination in the era of our Lord's reign over the earth still yet to come. "*Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids*" is the conclusion to chapter 9 and that is followed immediately by the promise in chap. 10 of the Lord giving showers of rain and grass in the field; this is a vivid picture of the Millennial Age at work. "*Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall...give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field*". This is still in the future tense: the day has not yet come but this is the prospect and it will surely be, and the standpoint of the prophet is as though he stands at the very threshold of that day and announces what he sees.

But the Lord has another word to speak, one that looks back to the past. "*The teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain*" (v.2 Margin). The teraphim were miniature images of the pagan gods, standing on shelves or in niches in the house to protect its inmates from harm; but they could not protect. "*Therefore*" says the Lord, the people "*were troubled, because there was no shepherd*". He has more to say about the unfaithful shepherds in the next chapter, but for the moment he contents himself by saying "*Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited...the house of Judah, and made them as his goodly (war) horse*" (v.3) The Lord is here taking his stand as it were in the dawn of the Millennial Age when the apostate leaders and unfaithful pastors have been deprived of their positions and the Lord himself has come out of his place to feed and exalt Israel. The past times had known the power of idol worship, of false prophets and soothsayers, of rapacious shepherds and ambitious leaders, the "he-goats" of verse 3 (RV). "*Be as the he-goats before the flocks*" was his admonition in the days of the Captivity (Jer. 50. 8 RV) when he called upon Israel and Judah to assert themselves and take the lead among the nations; but more often the leaders were themselves apostate as in this case and merited condemnation. "Shepherds" was the term for rulers whether civil or ecclesiastical; the priests were shepherds and so were the kings. "*The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by*

Baal, and walked after things that do not profit" (Jer. 2. 8). But now those dark days are past, and the Lord is taking action.

"The LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his...(war)horse in the battle. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together" (vv. 3-4). The time indicated is that at which the Lord of hosts has made the house of Judah his war-horse in the battle; that fixes it at the inauguration of the Messianic Age. From God comes the "corner" (*pinnah* - chief man, or as we would say "the key man") which harks back to Psa. 118. 22. *"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner"* and Isa. 28. 16. *"I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious (chosen) corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall (never be confounded) not make haste"*. (The RSV puts verse 4 in the future tense "out of him shall come" which is logical.) So too, is the "nail" in this same 4th verse, alluding to Isa. 22. 23, the nail "in a sure place", the Messiah upon whom all things will depend. So also, is the battle bow, which symbolises the triumphal progress of Messiah against the forces of evil as in Psa. 45, *"thine arrows are sharp...in the heart of the king's enemies"*. Logically, then, the restored and purified people of the Lord shall indeed, as verse 5 declares *"be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies....because the LORD is with them...And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph...and they shall be as though I had not cast them off... And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man,their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD."* (vv. 5-7).

With this stirring and somewhat martial picture of the victory which righteousness gains in the "Last Day" comes the Lord's promise to Israel regarding their future destiny and the downfall of their opponents. He will *"strengthen the house of Judah"* and *"save the house of Joseph"* and they will be restored to their land (v. 6). Ephraim shall be regathered following the Divine call. The mention of these three, Judah, Joseph, Ephraim, denotes that the centuries-old rift between the two halves of the nation has been healed; there is now only one people of Israel and that people is a united one rejoicing in the Lord.

"I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again" (vv. 8-9). The word "hiss" in v. 8 has the meaning of calling by means of a pipe or wind instrument. This is not

a call to war, as of a trumpet. The pipe or flute is an instrument of peace and the call is to come to a land where peace reigns and the peaceable arts of life can be followed without hindrance.

This picture of Judah, Joseph, and Ephraim being united in the arts of peace and godliness is a remarkable one when the implications are realised. Joseph was the favourite son of Jacob and his father conferred upon him the birthright, as Isaac had done with Jacob a generation earlier. From Joseph that birthright passed to Ephraim, one of Joseph's twin sons, but in later times the tribe of Ephraim became the most apostate of the tribes. Sadly did the Lord speak through Hosea the prophet "*When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died*" (Hos. 13. 1). So Ephraim became the leader of the Ten-Tribe kingdom with all its apostasy, and Judah of the Two-Tribe kingdom became the one through whom the purposes of God with the nation were eventually to be worked out; so Christ came of Judah and will one day be the greater David to rule all men everywhere, "*with justice and with judgment... even for ever*". (Isa. 9. 7) So there was enmity between Ephraim and Judah from that time and forward. Now in this vision Zechariah sees that enmity replaced by unity. Judah and Joseph / Ephraim, two tribes and ten tribes, are no longer divided into two peoples; they are one, blood-brothers as they were at the first. The prophet Ezekiel described this in his picturesque symbol of the two sticks, inscribed with the two names, which became the one stick in his hand. "*Son of man*" said the Lord to Ezekiel, "*take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah....then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim....and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand... Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen (nations), whither they be gone, and will....bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land...and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.*" (Ezek. 37. 15-22). The whereabouts of the "Lost Ten Tribes" has been a subject of speculation, a great deal of claimed history and not a little fanciful speculation for centuries. The Lord knows where they are and his word will be fulfilled in his own time and way.

So "*I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries;*" (v.9) this is the Dispersion among all nations subsisting throughout this present Age between the First and Second Advents. But, "*they shall live with their children, and turn again*"; this is the Restoration at the end of the Age. "*I will bring them...out...of Egypt,...and out of*

Assyria, and I will bring them into...Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them". Verse 11 defines the manner in which God will do this great thing. He will "pass through the sea with straightness" (the A.V. "affliction" in vs. 11 means straightness or tightness) and in this context pictures a deliverance analogous to the Red Sea crossing where God led the hosts while "the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (Exod. 14. 22). He shall "smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up" continues v. 11, a manifest allusion both to the Red Sea passage and the later crossing of Jordan into the Promised Land. "And the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart (pass) away".

Egypt and Assyria, traditional enemies and oppressors of Israel throughout the nation's history, well symbolise the world powers which have continued that oppression since the days of the Romans. In such fashion will the powers of evil of this world give place when God rises up for that purpose, as surely and inexorably as that of Egypt failed in the days of Moses. So the people of God will be given strength (v. 12) "*and they shall walk up and down in his name*", an affirmation of confidence that at that time, the time of the Messianic reign, peace and prosperity shall come, and the dark shadow of evil flee away.

In these two picturesque chapters, 9 and 10, the prophet conducts his readers through a rapid survey of history, outlining the careers of two great personages, both of whom set out to achieve world domination, the one by fear and force, the other by love and persuasion. The first was the Greek, Alexander the Great, conqueror of the world three centuries before the First Advent, a man of whom it was said that after subduing all known countries he sat down and wept because there were no worlds left for him to conquer. Three years later he died and the empire he had built fell to pieces. Verses 1-8 of chapter 9 tell of his progress and his conquests so far as they affected or concerned Israel. The second is Christ the Lord, Prince of Peace, who came, not with fanfare of trumpet and show of force as did Alexander, but in lowliness and love. Verses 9-12 picture his coming and his invitation to men to accept him. Then the rest of chapter 9 and the whole of chapter 10 foresee the day yet to come when He takes to himself his great power and reigns, King of the nations. And under that reign there will, at last be peace.

(To be continued)

AOH

. THE GATHERING HOME OF SAINTS

Devotional glimpses of our hope.
Chapter 1

Close your eyes for a moment to that present awareness of imperfection within to those hideous faults of these earthen vessels that so frequently humiliate those high aspirations of the new mind and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect day of

AWAKENING IN HIS LIKENESS.

No sense of sin disturbs the holy perfect thought of a mind completely tuned to that of the Lord Himself, responsive like the aeolian harp to each breath of the Spirit of God that plays as a gentle breeze upon it a mind and heart enlarged to share the very thoughts of God's Own heart, and capable of those most high and blessed emotions of the joy of the Lord Himself, as moment by moment, age upon age, the blessings of eternal oneness with the Lord drench us with delights, wave upon wave, forever...

Our spiritual life is made up of awakenings, rousing of the senses, from our first awakening to the light of Truth and Love and the realms of things eternal.

Perhaps in moments of holy contemplation the Lord awakens our mind to depths of truth we had not before suspected. Perhaps at times of great pressure, when the foes of the soul are too strong for us at such a moment He opens our eyes, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, to those great forces working together for us—the *Hosts of the LORD*, the limitless supply of all the divine resources. Perhaps, like Jacob, our hours of weariness have become times of vision and great reassurance of divine promise so that we feel we have just awakened to the personal watchcare of our God and His never-failing faithfulness, so that we are constrained to say, "*SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE, and I knew it not.*"

Our spiritual life is made up of such awakenings. THIS is the *ultimate* of all our awakenings, and each awakening of our present course makes it nearer.

Here is that moment of sweet release from all limitation of human frame, the moment of *VICTORY*. This is the awakening "where sin and sense molest no more", and the mind soars like the eagle to the sun, to gaze upon and to comprehend all the glorious fullness of truth's ultimate reality. In Scripture it is compared with the full light of noonday.

Doubly precious not only will that moment of blessed truth introduce us

into the closest, fullest, relationship and awareness of the glories of eternity, it also will mark the completion, the bringing to perfection, of Our Heavenly Father's most wondrous purpose for us.

The moment of reaching the goal, the reaching out and grasping of the prize of the high calling, the moment too, that will be, that *He* reaches His goal for *me*—His work in me *finished*, and the great seal of divine approval pronounced, “It is very good,” and, as in a dream, I will realise that *He speaks of His work in me!* And His “well done,” shall be, through all eternity, *enough for me.*

Only in the peaks of our present spiritual experience can we remotely sense that height of the Father's triumph in His achievement, the bringing of His child to glory, the setting of the jewel in His crown. “*They shall be Mine.*”

That moment of awakening to see what He has wrought! Will it not surpass our brightest hopes and sweetest dreams? The years of pilgrimage all lead to this. That delight in the Lord, deepening with time, will be answered in the granting of the heart's desires, to be experienced in ten thousand joys, all compressed into that moment of change.

How wonderful! It takes a whole pilgrim walk to change our mind, but just the twinkling of an eye to change our body. What body will be this? While that veil intervenes, we can grow no nearer in our comprehension than our Brother Paul and Brother John.

When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15, he did not know. Now he knows! He knew enough, that it would be a body pleasing, yes pleasing to the Lord. He knew that it would bear no resemblance to this body of humiliation. He knew that it would bear great resemblance unto the glorious body of His Lord in heaven. Even John, lost in spiritual depths of thought and vision, could only say, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be,” and yet that dear brother (1 John 3. 2) whose faith perceived each vision as a revealing of the glory of his Lord, and each truth for its solid rocklike certainty, could add, with no hiding of emotion, “we know that, when it is apparent what we shall be, we shall be like Him.” What manner of love is this?

Years of contemplation of the glory of God, that excellence of the qualities of the divine Mind, and the wonders of His mighty attributes, the absorption, in that holy state of heart, of the beauty of the Lord, all leaves

its mark, like the light exposed through the lenses of spiritual understanding upon the deeply sensitive heart.

The Spirit, the very disposition of the One we come to so dearly love, enters the heart, as the perception of His holiness penetrates the mind, and by the sharing of His very nature of light and love the glory is reflected, and the evidence begins to show, Whose child we are.

Thus does He lead His child to glory, from one blessed stage of His likeness to another. The faint glimpses of His glory, endearing in our spiritual infancy, imperceptibly grow through each maturing year and experience. How we would rejoice in heart to hear the remark of the effect of His Spirit in our being, and His nature in our whole demeanour, "Isn't he like his Father?"

The moment of awakening reveals that final blessed state, and I shall have my Father's eyes, eyes full of compassion, of deep perception, and of holy love, eyes that will reflect, within my own depths of being, those same beauties of character I have come to know and so dearly love in Him.

The Bride of Christ, the jewels that form that heavenly Jerusalem, each part is found to have the glory of God. And even in those scenes of breathtaking wonder of which the half has not yet been told, the King's daughter is at once at home, a child of that Light, before Whom she appears, all glorious within. In that beautiful description in the 45th Psalm, in which the Spirit-filled mind of the singer bubbles over with delight at the blessed scene envisioned, we find the queen clothed in most precious garments of gold. All the richest qualities of the divine nature now are hers. She is radiant in her robes of fine needlework. Each single stitch an expression of love for that One it has become her all-consuming desire to please. And yet, in the midst of glory.

"The Bride eyes not her garments, but her dear Bridegroom's face. I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of Grace. Not at the crown He giveth, but on His outstretched hand. The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land."

DH

E'en through harsh noises of our day,
A low, sweet prelude finds its way;
Through clouds of doubt and creeds of fear,
A light is breaking calm and clear.

Poems of Dawn

AS YE HAVE THEREFORE OPPORTUNITY

We are called upon by God to dispense acts of charity and kindness to others as and when opportunity permits. *“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) . The ways in which we can do good are very numerous, but perhaps the most valuable of them all is the instruction we can give to those who have an ear to hear respecting God’s will, purpose and plan. We should be careful not to let a chance of talking about the Truth go by us, for as we ourselves grow in the Spirit of God and become more and more in harmony with His plan, we realise that no other work is so grand as to make known to others God’s character, and the wideness of His mercy and love. Our constant desire should be to *“shew forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His most marvellous light”* (1 Peter 2. 9).

Paul especially states that we are to do this as we have opportunity. We are to be *“instant in season, out of season”* (2 Tim. 4. 2). We are to consider the interests and convenience of others before our own, and be instant in the Lord’s service whether seasonable or unseasonable to ourselves. *“...A word spoken in due season, how good is it!”* *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”* (Prov. 15. 23; Prov. 25. 11) Our love for the Lord and our eagerness to serve Him to the best of our ability, is to be our chief concern in life, before which everything else must give way.

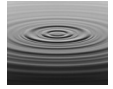
Important as this work is, we derive perhaps greater pleasure and satisfaction whilst fulfilling the latter part of the verse quoted—*“especially unto them who are of the household of faith”*. It is not our privilege to come into personal contact with our Lord on this side of the veil, but it is a great pleasure and privilege for us to help our brethren in Him, and to build them up with our love, kindness, sympathy, hope and faith. The more we deny ourselves in the service of our brethren, the more acceptable and precious will our sacrifice be in the sight of our Lord, who said as we do, or do not, unto His brethren, so we do, or do not, unto Him (Matt. 25. 40), for *“If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us”* (1 John 4. 12).

*“Blest are the sons of peace,
Whose hearts and hopes are one,
Whose kind designs to serve and please
Through all their actions run.”*

Young Bible Students Messenger

TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Three Aspects of Baptism



The priest before being inducted into office was first washed in the great “Laver” in the Court of the Tabernacle. In that simple act and the consecration ceremony which succeeded it we have the principles upon which acceptance with God is achieved. *Cleansing—Anointing—Sacrifice*; that was the order of things in the duty of priests in Israel and the same order prevails among Christians now.

First aspect

Repentance and belief in Christ brings justification by faith. That is the first step. That is cleansing. That is the truth lying behind Paul’s word to the Ephesians when he declares that Christ gave himself for his followers, the Church, *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word”* (Eph. 5. 26) and his declaration to Titus that Jesus saves us *“by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit”* (Tit. 3. 5). The washing must come before the renewing. That is only one aspect of the true baptism that lies behind the symbol, the ceremonial.

Second aspect

The second aspect is that which follows the initial justification, and is best expressed in the words of Paul to the Romans (Rom. 6. 4-5) *“we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death...”* Here is a theme that has nothing to do with cleansing but everything to do with the dedication of life to death that out of death there might come eternal life. It has to do with the going into death of the few, following the One Who first went into death alone, that out of that death all might be received into life. And that in turn harks back to a truth that was first enunciated in New Testament days by Peter on the Day of Pentecost itself, that this coming of man into eternal life is really a restoration of that which existed at the first. “Times of Restitution of all things” he calls the day when this new life is to be extended to all men, for there was a day at the very beginning when man, newly created by the hand of God, had eternal life within his grasp.

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 in the days of the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head (Gen. 3. 15). 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 even baptism doth also now save us...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*”. (1 Peter 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 which is ultimately to become the “*desire of all nations*”. (It is interesting again to note that the great Laver in Solomon’s Temple is called in the Old Testament by this very name of “*sea*”). (1 Kings 7. 23-44; 2 Chron. 4. 2-15)).

There we have what may be the foundation of this second and so much more important aspect of baptism. We who are buried *with* Christ by baptism into his death are forever separated from the world and its aims and interests; we have elected to follow Christ whithersoever He may lead—and He leads into those symbolic waters and beneath those waters and then out of those waters into a new life. Like as Christ was raised from the dead, so we also rise to walk in newness of life. That new life is lived in this world, here and now, but because of that new life we are no longer of this world. We have become citizens of the perfect world, the

Paradise of righteousness which lies beyond the waters, the Paradise to which all men will attain when at last the waters are done away—they in the earthly phase of that Paradise, and those who went through the waters in the spiritual, heavenly phase.

That then is the vision before us as we go down into the symbolic baptismal waters, when by the One Spirit we, individually, are baptised into the One Body (1 Cor. 12. 13). We, here, are still in the world of death and suffering and all manner of evil. Over there, on the other side of the water, there is the glorious world of the future, Eden restored, the River of Life and the Trees of Life, and the Holy City, New Jerusalem, waiting to come down from God to man. But Eden cannot be restored to man, much as man needs it and, maybe, longs for it, until Christ's consecrated followers have followed Him into those waters and been planted together in the likeness of His death. Only then can they emerge also in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6. 5). The world must wait until that has become an accomplished fact and the consecration of earthly life which is the real baptism has been consummated in actual death of the human frame and a glorious resurrection to spiritual being. "*We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*" (1 John 3. 2). Until then "the earnest expectation of the creature (creation) *waiteth* for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8. 19).

Third aspect

It is after consecration has become an established thing with us that we enter into the third aspect of baptism. The true baptism is not only cleansing; it is not only separation to holy things; it is also an entry into suffering. Suffering is an essential factor in the Divine Plan. We may not know—we do not know—just why that is so and just what redemptive or reformatory power is inherent in suffering, but the Scriptures show clearly that it is so. Our Lord's death on the Cross provided the Ransom for man, but his life of suffering was the offering for sin by means of which man will ultimately be reconciled to God. Both are necessary in the Divine Plan. And with those who are Christ's consecrated followers, seeking to become joint-heirs with him of the Kingdom and associated with him as his "Bride" in the glory of all future ages, the fact that they are dead to the world and are ready to lay down life itself for the Lord and the Truth is not the only fruit of their lives that God can use for the salvation of mankind. He can, and will, also use the fruit of every act of sacrifice and every pang of suffering that there has been throughout those consecrated lives. We realise, and say, at times, that suffering and sacrifice plays an important part in the development of character. Perhaps we could never

NOTICES

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SATURDAY 8 JUNE 2019**

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BIBLE STUDENTS SEMINAR DAY

Autumn 2019

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JONAH AND THE WHALE, TAKE 2?

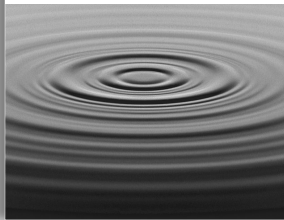
Many readers no doubt read the account or saw a picture of a man off the coast of South Africa who found himself in the mouth of a Bride's whale for two seconds early in March 2019. The man is reported to have taken a deep breath and was released without harm, for whales can dive down deep for many minutes. The mammal seems to have been surprised by this as was the man who was filmed saying it was "surely nothing I would want to do again." This aquatic occurrence reminds many students of the Bible, as well as those who read the record of Jonah and the whale to children, that Jonah was in the whale for 3 days. (Jonah 1. 17; Matt. 12. 40.)

approach conformity to the Divine likeness without it. We do know that our Lord was made perfect through suffering, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord.

Therefore our baptism is, beside a baptism of cleansing and a baptism of separation, a baptism of suffering. It was so with Jesus. *“I have a baptism to be baptized with”* He said *“and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”* (Luke 12. 50). When the mother of Zebedee’s children, John and James, asked that her sons be given the chief places of honour in the Kingdom, Jesus asked them if they were able to be baptised with the baptism that He was baptised with. They assured Him that they were able. What innocent confidence they had, knowing not what the future held for them of suffering and persecution and death! Jesus knew. *“Ye shall indeed be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with.”* Perhaps he knew also that they would be faithful and come through triumphant at the end.

Extract from ‘The Christian Doctrine of Baptism’

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM



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‘Baptism in the New Testament’
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The Light Within

PEOPLE are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out. But in the darkness, beauty is seen only if there is a light within. Let us today start looking for that light. But more so, let us learn to let our own light shine brightly.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Peter 3. 3-4

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. 1 John 1. 7

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email-editor@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk

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