

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Volume 97 Issue 5

September / October 2020



He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.

Psalm 1:3

Contents

Thought for the Month	162
Trees of Righteousness	164
Zechariah—Pt. 17	165
Philemon—The Change From Within	169
The Plowman shall overtake the Reaper	175
A Tree Planted by a River	181
Come all ye Saints to Pisgah's Mountain—A hymn	188
Atonement	190
The Gathering Home of Saints—Pt. 8	195
We Will All Fall Asleep	198
Notices	199

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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

Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Trees provide us with ample material in the Bible. They were used in the Feast of Tabernacles with the branches and leaves to make temporary shelters at the third and final feast of the year marking the end of the harvests as well as the time when the Hebrews dwelt in tents during the forty years they wandered in the wilderness after exiting Egypt. This is no doubt why Zechariah used this feast to bring to a close the prophecy he wrote under divine guidance.

Psalm One describes the blessed condition a person is in, who meditates on the word of God, like being a tree planted by a river. Onesimus and Philemon were two such Christians of the early church, one a master the other a slave. (Greek *doulos*) One can only conjecture why the former fled his master. Was the master a good one? Nevertheless the Christian message sees reform and redemption of the individual a probability and so it seems this was the case that both were like a tree by a river.

Water is fundamental to the growth of trees, which use their roots to absorb moisture and nutrients to grow strong and healthy. This is of concern at present to the inhabitants of Egypt. They rely on the Nile for its water for drinking and agriculture. Ethiopia is building the Great Renaissance dam on the Blue Nile which provides 85% of the water for the Nile. It will be Africa's biggest hydroelectric power plant. The reservoir will cover an area equivalent to the size of Greater London. Egypt, and to a lesser extent Sudan, fear that filling it up over just six years will have a great impact on their countries and are asking for the

time to be extended to limit the impact on their residents and farmers. How dependent one country is on another!

Amos was a rural man and gatherer of wild figs and clearly familiar with harvests, fruit and the agricultural season in that climate. The end of the harvests is seen as a time of plenty from the trees and the fields. Once the harvest is complete the fields are then ploughed to make ready for the next crop and next season’s harvest. So it will be at the end of this age when the harvest of this age will end at last and the ploughman can again prepare the way for the next millennial age crop.

What rejoicing then to those who will walk amid the trees by the rivers when in that millennial day they will walk once more with their friends. This is poignant with the large loss of life due to COVID-19 in the U.K. and other countries.

Pondering the feast of tabernacles also reminds us of the Day of Atonement which is just five days earlier in the month when the sin offerings were made by Aaron for himself and his house and the nation at large. It cannot be without note that this time of year would have been when our Lord Jesus was baptised at Jordan and began his work at the age of thirty.

INFLUENCE

Drop a pebble in the water
 And its ripples reach out far;
 And the sunbeams dancing on them
 May reflect them to a star.



Give a smile to some one passing,
 Thereby make his morning glad;
 It may greet you in the evening
 When your own heart may be sad.



Do a deed of simple kindness
 Though its end you may not see.
 It may reach like widening ripples
 Down a long eternity.

*Joseph Morris
 songs of the nightingale*

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.



TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS



In their changeful beauty trees possess a peculiar advantage over all other forms of vegetation.

Though they are always ornamental, yet, whether viewed alone, or seen in wild sylvan masses, they look the loveliest in Nature's decay. Fair are the woods in spring, when first their leafy boughs unfold the bright and exquisitely tender verdure of a new life. Fairer still they seem in the deep beauty of their summer foliage, with its tints of richest green, extending cool and inviting shades and filling the air with the soft sweet music of their rustling leaves. But fairest by far are the trees in the fall of the year. Well has it been said, "As golden Autumn steals over the forest comes the period of its richest glory; that in which the painter revels, vainly tasking his palette for its imitation; and though these bright hues are the tokens of decay, the foliage has a glory in its approaching dissolution unknown to it in youth and vigour." Then the birch shines one mass of burnished gold. The beech is resplendent with brightest tints of orange. The "ensanguined dogwood" after a purple stage passes into the most intense crimson. Many rich brown hues adorn the oak; the maple family assume a splendid mantle of variegated colour; while, in addition to these:

"A thousand tints which Flora, dressed in all her pride of bloom, could scarcely equal, decorates the groves."

Thus is it in the life of a believer. It is brighter and more lovely towards the close.

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4:18)

He may truly take up the language of the Apostle: "*Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*" (2 Cor. 4:16) Bright as he appears in the springtime of conversion, or in the summer beauty of developed Christian character, it is in the autumn hours of approaching decay that the child of God is seen in his fairest colours. His last days are his best, for then his departing spirit seems to receive a hallowing foretaste of the glory it is about to enter.

(Selected)

November / December 1998 Issue



ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

17. The Feast of Tabernacles

The world's deliverance from evil is followed by the last and greatest Feast of Tabernacles. Here, and for the last time, Zechariah draws upon the historical ceremonial of the people of Israel to illustrate the nature of "things to come." Everyone in all the world, he says, (Zech. 14:16) will go up to Jerusalem year by year to worship the Lord and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles; these are obviously figurative expressions to denote the response of mankind in that day, to the blessings of the Kingdom.

The Feast of Tabernacles in Israel was a development of the normal end of year harvest celebrations which are characteristic of every people in every age. It is probable that Israel had some such celebration when in Egypt; this is referred to in Exod. 23:16 as the "feast of ingathering" and was made obligatory under the Mosaic Law. Upon Israel's entry into the land this feast was expanded in its scope; for seven days the people dwelt in temporary shelters made of tree branches and leaves, "booths," from which the feast was re-named the Feast of Tabernacles (temporary dwelling places). This period was one of rejoicing for past deliverance and promise of future blessing. "*Because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.*" (Deut. 16:15) Significantly, the feast was held almost immediately following the close of the annual Day of Atonement ceremonies, which culminated in the formal effecting of atonement for the sins of the assembled people by the officiating High Priest. The typical picture therefore is that of sacrifice and offering on behalf of sin ended; the people cleansed and brought into a state of reconciliation with God, the rigours of the past forgotten, rejoicing in the plenitude of present harvest blessings and joyful anticipation of even greater blessings to come. And this is why Zechariah, looking into the roseate future immediately following the establishment of the Divine Kingdom on earth, sees it as an idealised Feast of Tabernacles.

This going up of all the nations year by year to worship and "keep the Feast of Tabernacles" as related in ch. 14:16 is obviously a picture of world-wide acceptance of the Kingdom. Men everywhere will hail the new administration with relief and joy and hasten to proffer allegiance to earth's new King. It does not follow that this attitude of mind is universal—the process of world conversion is going to occupy a long period of time and the requirements of the text can be considered well fulfilled in the spectacle of successive contingents of converts entering into a state of reconciliation with God and, in the gladness and gratitude thus engen-

dered, thus “keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” These are they who, in Isaiah’s vision declare “*Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*” (Isa. 25:9) The delivered Holy Nation is involved in this, for the Lord says through Isaiah again (ch. 66:18-19) “*I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory...and I will send those that escape*” (a reference to delivered Israel) “*unto the nations...and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles (nations).*” Here is the missionary work of the Millennial Age in full operation and it is the result of this work which is described in terms of the nations coming up to Jerusalem to worship.

But not all of mankind are thus converted, at least at the beginning. Verses 17-19 of chapter 14 provide for those who do not thus “come up.” The penalty is that upon them there shall be no rain. For some reason Egypt is singled out and specifically named among the general mass of earth’s peoples and this may well be, as is sometimes suggested, an allusion to the fact that Egypt has virtually no rainfall and obtains all its water for crop-growing purposes from the annual inundation of the Nile. The fact that Egypt is independent of the need for rain will not absolve the dissidents among them from the penalty. The meaning, of course, is that the unregenerate of the nations have no part nor lot in the life-giving blessings of the river of water of life, the symbolic medium of transmission of Divine life to man in that day. Ezekiel describes this river as he saw it in vision, and so does John the Revelator. (Ezek. 47; Rev. 22) The river flows from the sanctuary of God, and together with the trees of life which grow on its banks furnishes both food and healing for the nations. It is obvious of course that the blessing of lasting life which is offered freely to all men must be consciously accepted on the basis of true conversion and allegiance to the Lord Christ who is the channel of that life. “*The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him that heareth say, ‘Come.’ And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*” (Rev. 22:17) That is the law of the Millennial Age, and that life is available to all who will accept it on the terms offered. Such as may decline it, in the obduracy of their hearts or in their refusal to turn from the ways of evil, “*upon them shall be no rain.*” (v.17)

So the curtain rises upon the last scene, a glimpse—a very brief glimpse—of the world as it shall be when the elimination of evil is accomplished and all men and all things in the world are holy unto the Lord. “*In that day shall there be upon the (bridle) bells of the horses, ‘HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD;’ and the pots in the LORD’s house shall be like the bowls*

before the altar.” (v.20) That inscription appeared on the golden mitre worn by all of Israel’s successive High Priests from Aaron downward; it denoted the complete dedication of the wearer to the service of God. In those days the High Priest stood out as one specially consecrated and sanctified individual in the midst of a secular society; in the world of the future, says Zechariah, everything from the highest to the lowest will be sanctified to the Divine service—even the beasts of burden. There may be some allusion here to the fact that the horse was peculiarly the symbol of war and the political power of this world; in that day it will be the symbol of Divine power and of peace, for God will have made “*wars to cease to the ends of the earth.*” (Psa. 46:9) The “pots in the LORD’s house” were the cauldrons in which the flesh of the sacrifices were boiled, much more lowly in the scale of Divine service than the golden bowls of the altar which were used to carry the blood of the sacrifices into the presence of God. But in that day all will be equal. Whatever service or work is performed, be it lofty or menial, will be of equal value in the sight of God, for all will be done as unto Him and for His glory. Yea, says Zechariah triumphantly, every vessel in Jerusalem and in all Judah shall be holy; the distinction between sacred and secular will stand in direct relation to the eternal purpose of God and nothing that exists, nothing that is done, is outside that purpose. The whole of human life and all its activities will be holy unto God.

“In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of Hosts.” (v.21) Of all the alien tribes and peoples with which Israel was daily in contact the Canaanites represented idolatry and defilement in its grossest forms. Repeatedly during Israel’s history the Temple was defiled by alien peoples or alien worship. Not so in that coming day, says Zechariah. The Temple will be cleansed and holy, free from any suspicion of defiling influence. A loftier vision of the same truth was given to John when he looked upon the celestial city which pictured the completed work of God with mankind. “*There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*” (Rev. 21:27)

Thus ends what is without doubt the most colourful and eloquent book of symbolic imagery in the Old Testament, paralleled only by the Book of Revelation in the New. The two books, separated in time of writing by six centuries, do in fact constitute a remarkable pair. The Book of Revelation is an account of the conflict between good and evil as it affects the Christian Church, the heavenly instrument in God’s hand for world

conversion, and closes with the overthrow of evil and the triumph of the Church. The Book of Zechariah is an account of the conflict between good and evil as it affects Israel, the earthly instrument in God’s hand for world conversion, and closes with the overthrow of evil and the triumph of Israel. The two books commence their respective stories at separate periods on the stream of human history, but they coincide at their close, both culminating at the point where the Lord Christ at his Second Advent takes to himself his great power and commences that reign over the earth which is elsewhere described as “*the desire of all nations.*” (Hag. 2:7) Perhaps the best commentary upon the whole dramatic story resides in the Lord’s words to the prophet, to be repeated to Israel, right at the commencement of Zechariah’s ministry. “*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.*” (Zech. 1:17)

*The End
AOH*

WORLD CONVERSION—WHEN?

In the light of the sentence toward the bottom of page 165 some may be interested in the pamphlet “World Conversion—When?”

“And when all things are thus subject to him, then the Son himself will also be made subordinate to God who made all things subject to him, and thus God will be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:28 NEB)

DESIRE

Desire *n.* craving, longing; eagerness to obtain; expressed wish or request; lust, object of desire.

Oxford Dictionary

SPARTACUS

A Thracian who became a Roman slave and gladiator in Capua, and headed an insurrection in Italy in 73 BC. The slaves he raised routed several Roman armies, but he was eventually defeated by Crassus in 71 B.C. and slain.

Thrace, ancient name of terr. in S.E. Europe, part of which has been added to Greece; successively under Macedonian, Roman, Byzantine and Turkish rule before passing to Greece.

Pears Cyclopaedia

PHILEMON—THE CHANGE FROM WITHIN

With all the many differences in law, manners and customs, nevertheless the Romans, Greeks and Jews had one thing in common—a dependence on slave economy. However much the modern mind may admire any or all of these civilisations that fact must be admitted.

The difference between the Jews and everybody else on this question was that under their law no slave could be held longer than six years (in the Year of Jubilee all slaves had to be freed*) and there were regulations laid down for their protection. A young female slave, for example, on reaching a marriageable age had either to be married to her master or his son, and in the eventuality of neither wanting her she had to be freed. (Lev. 25:6)

The Greeks treated their slaves, on the whole, better than the Romans though this is not saying a great deal. If a Greek slave was required to give evidence in a law court as a witness he could expect to be tortured, but on the other hand his master could not put him or her to death without the consent of the Court. If any slave was in danger of having their virtue assaulted, they could take refuge in a temple, and claim the right to be sold to a different master. Children born to slave women became slaves themselves.

With the Romans, however, the slave was not a person, he was a ‘thing’ and absolutely in the power of his master. This is not to say that every Roman slave owner was a callous brute; many of them treated their slaves well, but being convinced of the rightness of the course they were pursuing would probably have been horrified at the suggestion that slavery was wrong.

There had been attempts to bring about a change in conditions. The Romans and the Greeks, at the time Paul was writing his epistles, were conscious of the pressure put on the system less than a hundred years before by the Thracian ex-gladadiator Spartacus. The Romans particularly had cause to remember this revolt against slavery in 73-71 B.C. It had cost too many lives and imbedded too many dangerous ideas about liberty. According to what is known of the leader of the slaves he was a humane man, and remembering that, though intended for the gladiatorial arena, unless he distinguished himself in his first fight and was subsequently freed, it meant winning every contest for three years when the doubtful mercy of two years’ slavery ending in freedom would be accorded him (at least that was the custom with prisoners of war and the Thracian had been

a soldier). One can understand how a short cut to liberty would appeal to Spartacus.

Onesimus was a different proposition altogether. His name, by a stroke of irony, meant ‘profitable,’ but this apparently was the opposite of what he was in reality. After being more trouble than he was worth to his master he finally ran away, helping himself to some of Philemon’s money in the process. Philemon may very probably have been glad to see the back of him, and there is no account given of any attempt on his part to follow and recapture the young man. Perhaps this was an indication of the change in Philemon’s inner feelings for even the kindest pagan slave owner would have set out in indignant pursuit.

It has been agreed that Paul wrote this letter from prison. It has not been agreed where Paul was in prison. Some would argue for Ephesus and point out that it was not so far from Colosse where Philemon lived, whereas Rome, the traditionally held viewpoint, several hundred miles away, would be too far to be the objective of an escaped slave.

The answer or answers to that argument would be—

- a) No runaway slave would take refuge in any town where there was the remotest chance of his master finding him, or of being recognised.
- b) Rome was a large enough city for any runaway to hide quite successfully for a long period of time, and the underworld of the capital would always welcome one more fugitive.
- c) That was Onesimus’s purpose in helping himself to Philemon’s money.

We do not know how Onesimus and Paul met. Onesimus may indeed have seen Paul at Philemon’s house, for the apostle seemed to be on friendly terms with him and his family. “*To Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier...*” (vv.1-2) And Archippus has also been included in the farewell messages in the letter to the Colossians.

Onesimus may have been denounced as a runaway slave. Epaphras, whose position approximated to that of minister to the Church at Colosse, who was with Paul at that time may have recognised him and persuaded him to put his case to the apostle. It might be asked if anyone desperate enough to run away—and a thief into the bargain—would throw away his chance of freedom so easily. The penalties for runaway slaves were

severe; the law would have upheld Philemon if he had put him to death. It is unlikely that any other fugitive slaves would have given Onesimus away, for they stood together. As one writer observed, their code was “love each other, love lies, love licentiousness” and so on. A possible explanation may have been that Onesimus learnt the apostle was in Rome—we know Paul had been allowed to rent a house there and to receive anyone who wanted to see him—and that the memory of the teaching he had half-forgotten stirred up feelings of remorse. Perhaps Onesimus’s conscience, which hitherto had not had much opportunity of making itself heard, went into action. Perhaps he may have had a superstitious fear of the apostle which, bearing in mind Paul’s fiery preaching, is very possible.

Whatever reason finally prompted Onesimus to throw himself on the mercy of Paul, there is no cause to disbelieve that he presented the apostle with a very delicate problem. To give shelter to a runaway slave was the equivalent of being a receiver of stolen goods. Paul was quite capable of dealing with such a situation, however, and such was the influence he could exert over practically everybody that, probably overwhelmed with gratitude and relief from a remorseless conscience, Onesimus, for the first time perhaps, began to justify his name—“*Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.*” (v.11)

There is no reason to suppose that Paul approved of slavery, though he never preached directly against it for fear of its upsetting the real purpose of his life—the spreading of the Christian belief. His attitude seems to have been that if a man is free in Christ, the slavery he is enduring is a passing thing, besides which, believing in the imminent return of Christ there would have seemed little purpose in his eyes in campaigning for the freedom of slaves. Nevertheless Paul, whilst stressing the need for servants to be obedient to their masters, also emphasised the need for masters to treat their servants/slaves properly. The status of a slave was less than nothing. There were slaves who bought their freedom and some who received it as a reward, but the standard of behaviour was understandably low. What incentive had men and women to try to lead moral lives if they were the property of their masters and death was the only means by which they could obtain freedom. It is almost impossible for us to realise what the advent of Christianity meant to the slave community, or what a tremendous assertion Colossians 3:10-11 is—

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor

free: but Christ is all, and in all.”

In other words, Christ is the master of all men.

The problem Paul faced was neither philosophical nor theological, but intensely practical. The apostle does not seem to have been a sentimental man, yet one can assume that there were some good qualities in Onesimus, and that he had been converted by Paul's teaching, otherwise why should he stay there in the prison, and so we read—

“Whom I would have retained with me.” (v.13)

It would appear Paul had developed an affection for Onesimus, referring to him as “my son.” (v.10) As in other troublesome circumstances, and as it was impossible at that moment for obvious reasons to visit Colosse, Paul has to rely on his ability as a letter writer.

His letter to Philemon is unique among his writings. It is the shortest, and it is certainly the most cordial. No fiery teaching, no scathing denunciation; sweetness and light abound from the first verse. The Churches at Corinth and Galatia would scarcely recognise Paul as the writer, which proves that Paul could be all things to all men.

We do not know if Philemon was rich; the fact that Onesimus was his slave is not conclusive; even persons of modest incomes owned a slave or two, but the Church at Colosse met in his house so we can perhaps assume that he was reasonably prosperous. Paul does not rush into battle on Onesimus's behalf. The first nine verses are given to personal greetings, and one can gauge Paul's diplomacy by—

- a) He does not refer to himself as an apostle.
- b) He refers to Apphia, Philemon's wife/sister/daughter as “beloved” which was extraordinary unless Apphia was cast in the mould of Lydia.

There are diplomatic references to Philemon's faith, and the love which Paul is sure he has for his fellow Christians and for Paul also. This love, the apostle continues, has made him confident enough to ask a favour of a brother in Christ. He could use his authority and command Philemon, but he would rather ask him, as an old man, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

This is appealing enough to bring tears to the eyes of a graven image and by this time Philemon would be in the right mood to grant anybody's request. Paul then lays the case before Philemon. He is making this request on behalf of his son, Onesimus. There is sympathy in the recognition of the slave's uselessness in past days, but things are very

different now. Paul manages to infuse the right note of regret in the information that he is sending Onesimus back to Colosse. If he could have kept Onesimus with him he knows he would have continued to care for Paul as Philemon would have done had he been in his place. He knows, however, that Philemon will receive “his son” as if he had been Paul himself. As if this is not enough, to cut short any protest Philemon may have made, Paul points out how well things have turned out—

“For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.” (vv.15-17)

It probably occurred to the apostle at this point that some reference to the stolen money might be appreciated, and so, taking the pen from whoever was writing at his dictation, he adds the following—

“If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.” (v.18)

Paul makes it clear, immediately afterwards, that he has written this with his own hand, so will repay anything owing, but hastens to add that he would not dream of saying how much Philemon owes him, Paul, even his very soul. If any other than Paul had written this letter it might be said to be a gentle attempt at intimidation!

Paul then proceeds to assure Philemon that he knows he will do even more than he has asked, and ends by suggesting that perhaps Philemon will prepare a room for him as he hopes that through the prayers of the Church he may come to them at Colosse. He includes Epaphras in the list of farewells which is understandable since he was a minister of the Colossian Church. There may, however, be a subtle undertone. It is perhaps a way of intimating that there is a witness to his request for forgiveness on behalf of Onesimus. It would hardly do for Epaphras to return home to find Onesimus dead or sent to the mines!

Nevertheless Paul was depending upon the soundness of Philemon’s belief in Christ. It would have been no problem for him to behave in a benevolent way as long as his rights and privileges were not attacked. If it was a shallow faith, Onesimus would have cause to regret returning, but Paul, who knew from his own experience how belief in Christ can alter a man’s attitude, must have been sure of the genuineness of Philemon’s faith. It was not the kind of letter to send to a pagan slave owner, although its very audacity might have carried the day.

There are reasons for thinking that Paul did not go far wrong in assessing the character of Philemon. It may be stretching the long arm of coincidence, but unless Onesimus was an inheritance, or the child of a slave girl, why did Philemon not take advantage of the law that compelled slave dealers to take back slaves sold under false pretences (and any slave dealer in his right mind would hesitate to dwell on Onesimus's unprofitableness) or pay compensation? Perhaps he had tried to give his slave every chance. But the strongest reason for believing that Philemon did as he was asked is that the letter is in existence, that we have it in the New Testament today. No-one seems to doubt its genuineness, and there is no reason why anyone should forge such a personal letter. Slavery was not wiped out of existence by Paul's words; perhaps Philemon did not free his other slaves. It took centuries of the influence of the Christian spirit, an essentially practical thing, to wipe out such an iniquitous economic system, which the undoubtedly sincere Spartacus thought he could batter down by sheer force.

Over forty years later, at the time Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was being taken to Rome to die a martyr's death in the arena, there was a Bishop of Ephesus called Onesimus. It would be interesting to think it was the same man—it would be a satisfactory ending, and in any case in a world which the Christians were turning upside down, there would be nothing incongruous in such a solution.

ENGLISH OAK

Quercus robur

The English Oak has been the 'king' of British Trees. Not for nothing did the botanists name it *robur*, 'sturdy', for until men devised iron cutting tools the oak resisted all attempts to fell it. Its timber later became the foremost construction material, for it was strong and durable and could be grown into the curved shapes suitable for the cruck frames of houses and the knees, or frame supports, of ships.

By the time of Elizabeth I, felling of oak trees had become so extensive that laws had to be passed to protect the tree. Later, the demands of the navy led to extensive planting of oaks in royal forests; many of the trees planted for this purpose survive today to give pleasure to the countrygoer.

Tall, lightly branched trees are still in demand for oak panelling and for furniture, in which the silvery grain can be displayed to advantage. The acorns were once an animal foodstuff of prime importance, feeding the pigs that were turned loose in the forests in the autumn—a right of 'pannage' that is still jealously guarded by commoners living in the New Forest.

Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Britain
Readers Digest

THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER

A Parable for Our Times

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel.” (Amos 9:13-14)

Amos was a countryman and a gatherer of wild figs. (Amos 7:14) He was also a prophet, a man deeply devoted to God and looking in faith and hope for the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth. It is not surprising therefore that his visions of that kingdom were framed not in military settings, as was the case with Daniel, or priestly temple settings as with Ezekiel, but in the rural settings of agriculture and husbandry. Because of this the Holy Spirit has given us, through him, an intimate little parable—for parable it is—of one aspect of the Time of the End which is of special interest to us today. It illustrates, in symbolic language, a truth that we must take to heart if we would be intelligent servants knowing what our Lord doeth.

The general background of the picture is one of unprecedented prosperity in material things. The harvest has been so plenteous that it has had to be prolonged into ploughing time, and since in Israel the harvest normally commenced in May and was over by June, whilst ploughing did not commence until October, this must have been a wonderful harvest. The vintage of grapes, which is normally gathered in August and ended by September, has been so heavy that the treading of the winepress, converting the rich yield into new wine, is still going on when sowing time commences in November. There is even greater prosperity to come, for in consequence of all this, the mountain slopes upon which the vines are grown, will “drip” (*Heb.*) sweet (new) wine; the exuberance of vines resulting from that sowing and the consequent heavy yield of grapes making it as though the mountains were literally “dripping” with wine; whilst the hills (the lower rounded eminences of the “*Shephelah*” or plain of Judea*) will melt (flow down—*Heb.*), an allusion to the rippling effect of the wind as it passes over vast fields of standing corn, making it appear from a distance as though it were flowing down the slopes in successive waves. Amos saw a land rich in vines and corn and growing richer, and with the Psalmist he could well say “*The little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.*” (Psa. 65:12-13) And to

* Editor’s note: It should be noted the word translated “hills” is H1389 *Gibah*. The Shephelah or Shfela are lowlands and foothills in Judea which are fertile rolling hills, not to be confused with the coastal plains.

crown this sunlit vision of the future the Lord stamps it as a revelation of the End Time by telling His prophet *“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof..”* (Amos 9:14)

Having thus noted that the real application of the picture is to the coming of the Kingdom, and believing that coming to be an imminent event, we naturally feel a close interest in the details of this parable. First of all, notice that there are two harvests and two vintages included in the picture—this fact is not always readily realised. The first harvest is plenteous but it is brought to an end by the ploughman, breaking up the ground for the work of a new year; and the result of that new year’s work is another harvest so plentiful that the very hills, covered to their tops with corn, seem to be literally melting with their golden load as the wind passes over it. The first vintage is plenteous too, so plenteous that the labours involved encroach upon the work of sowing for the next year; but evidently the sowing accomplishes its work, and in that next year even this plenteous vintage is excelled by the masses of vines, terrace upon terrace, covering the mountains as far as the eye can see, so laden with purple grapes that to the poetic mind, foreseeing in anticipation the day of gathering, it is as though the mountains “drip with new wine.” In our understanding of this Scripture therefore we must find room for two harvests and two vintages. It is also closely associated with faithfulness to the Lord and zeal for His service on the part of a people consecrated to His service. This is indicated by the evident connection between the words of Amos and the promise of God given to Israel recorded in Lev. 26:3-5: *“If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.”*

A point that needs to be considered is the connection of this passage with the preceding few verses, which are quoted in Acts 15. *“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after (call upon) the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.”* (Acts 15:16-17) The whole prophecy has to do with the active work that is going on in the end of this Age to bring in the everlasting Kingdom of God.

The realisation that there are two harvests indicated in the text yields the interpretation. Obviously these two harvests are the fruits of the works of the great Ages in the Divine Plan, the Gospel Age and the Millennial Age. Leaving chronological considerations out of the question, it is clear that there has been for over a hundred and fifty years now a great Christian activity centred around expectation of the Lord's return to set up his Kingdom, and that during that time there has been a great rise of Bible Societies, organisations of students, mighty revivals, and every form of Christian witness and activity. In a very real sense it could be said that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a reaping of seed that was sown during the earlier part of the Gospel Age.

But this has been a spiritual work, a service designed to reach the spiritually minded and show to them more plainly than before the "High Calling of...Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14) which is the great preoccupation and purpose of this Age. Whatever may be one's personal convictions regarding the Gospel Age "Harvest" in a dispensational and theological sense, it can hardly be denied that in its practical outworking it has proved to be a movement of Christian people of all denominations into a condition of closer personal relationship to their Lord and an enhanced appreciation of their High Calling. That is a rather important point. The next Age is an age of world conversion in which the ambassadors of Christ will reap abundant results from their labours; the present age, in its partial failure to convert the world, has shown that its primary purpose is the winning for Christ and the preparation for future missionary service a smaller body of dedicated believers, "a people for God's Name." During this "reaping," therefore, our Lord has been primarily concerned with the members of his Church more so than with the world at large.

But as the Age passes on to its end a new feature develops. The end of the Church's career in earth is at hand, the glorification of the last members imminent, yet it cannot be that God leaves Himself without a witness on earth. He has never done so in all recorded history. Clearly there must be some who have gained an understanding of the Divine Plan and whose hopes and aims are directed, not towards the heavenly, but towards the earthly phase of the Kingdom. As the spiritually minded ones "decrease" so must these earthly heralds of the new Day "increase." Their work is not that of reaping the harvest of this Age; rather that of preparing the ground for the next. As the reaping tails off to its end so the breaking up of fallow ground for Millennial work will begin to come into operation. Here is where the "ploughshare of trouble," as we have called it, will do its work; for the breaking up of the "field" preparatory to the work of the new Age

is not only to be done by preaching and witnessing, it is also to be done by trouble upon the nations and the failure of all men's schemes for reform and reconstruction. In fact, it may be more correct to think of the ploughman as picturing the trouble that is upon the nations, and the sowing of seed as the Kingdom message which will be proclaimed consistently until the world passes into Armageddon. There is no doubt that in the near future men's hearts are going to be ploughed as never before.

The ploughing, then, goes on for some little while after the reaping has ceased. This "harvest" of the Age evidently had its commencement over a century ago, and progressed until it became a mighty work. The ploughman of trouble first became evident over a century ago, and by now is rapidly overtaking ("coming near" is the literal Hebrew meaning) the reaper so that the reaping work is being steadily reduced and diminished by the pressure of the general trouble on the nations. Is not this true to the facts? Every tendency of the day is to the suppression of interest in spiritual things. The widest field of endeavour yet remaining to those who seek to gather spiritually minded ones to a closer relationship with the Lord lies, not with the mass of men generally, as was the case say a century ago, but in Christian systems where may be found those who yearn for heavenly things. Such are the last grains of wheat in this, the final hour of the harvest.

The ploughman has not quite overtaken the reaper; but he is coming very close. Perhaps the full development of that fast-approaching world system which is to force all except the faithful "Watchers" into a material, scientific, anti-Christian mould of thought and action (see Rev. 13:14-17) will mark the completion of the overtaking. There the reaping will end; the work of the Christian Church in this Age be finished, and the glorification of the last members not long delayed.

But there will still be those who are "scattering the seed," continuing the message of the coming earthly Kingdom. Even though the Church be gone, God will still have His witnesses in the earth, and the signs of the approaching catastrophe may be by then so evident that there may be not a few who will stop and listen to the message of the Millennial reign. But the treader of grapes will by then also be coming very near; with the completion of the gathering of the harvest of the earth it will be the turn of the vintage (Rev. 14:18) and the One who treads the winepress of the wrath of God (Rev. 19:15) will be coming forth to that dread work. "*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?*" cries

the prophet. (Isa. 63:1) The answer leaves no doubt as to the identity of the One who will both bring to the dust the evil systems of the earth and set up his own glorious Kingdom in their place. The time of Armageddon, of “Jacob’s Trouble,” of the last uprising of evil against the incoming forces of the Kingdom of righteousness, will have come and the vintage will for a time press against the sowers of seed and bring their work to a temporary standstill. There will be one sharp time of trouble in which it will seem as if all the powers of righteousness have been silenced and crushed to the earth; but it is at that moment that God arises from His place to intervene in earth’s affairs, and from the moment of that intervention that we are to date the Kingdom established in power.

It is from this point of time that the mountains will commence to “drop” new (sweet) wine, the true and health-giving teachings of the Kingdom. *“Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”* (Isa. 2:3) The old doctrines which have been characteristic of the “vine of the earth” (Rev. 14:18-19) will have been done away; Satan will be bound and no longer able to influence mankind for evil; the great institutions of man which have oppressed and enslaved so many will have been utterly destroyed, and every vestige of man’s former rule have passed away. This will be the “mountain” in which the Lord will *“make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”* (Isa. 25:6) The wine of that Kingdom will be abundant and free. *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”* (Isa. 55:1) That is the “sweet wine” which the “mountains” will “drop down” in that day.

It is later in the Age that “all the hills shall melt.” The growth of the Millennial corn-harvest will require all the Age for its accomplishment. Then, as now, it must be *“first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.”* (Mark 4:28-29) All through the Age the Divine missionaries will be at work, teaching, instructing, encouraging, persuading men to turn from sin to serve the living God. They will see the immature wheat growing to full stature and turning from green into gold; one day there will be a sweeping of the Holy Spirit over the earthly wheatfield and all the erect stems will rustle and stir in response to the Divine influence that is passing over them, and it will be as though great waves are passing over the serried (crowded together) ranks of stalks, and one might say “see, the very hills are

flowing down into the plain.” But it will not be the melting that means destruction; it will be the melting that indicates a final and complete surrender of all human hearts to God, the response of the creature to the Creator, the visible effect of the work of the Divine Spirit in the earth. So will the last shadow of evil flee away, the last rebel against the authority of God reap the inevitable consequence, and the sons of men enter into the glorious sunlight of the Divine presence: for “*in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD.*” (Hag. 2:9)

AOH



FIG TREE

Ficus carica (Moraceae)

“*Learn a lesson from the fig-tree. When its tender shoots appear and are breaking into leaf, you know that summer is near.*” (Matt. 24:32 NEB)

The fig features on several famous occasions in the Bible, in which it has the distinction of being the first plant to be mentioned. “*The eyes of both of them were opened and they discovered that they were naked; so they stitched fig-leaves together and made themselves loin cloths.*” (Gen. 3:7 NEB) Or, as the Geneva Bible (1560) has it, “*they...made themselves breeches.*”

The Hebrew word for the fig tree is *Teenah*, meaning to “spread out.” Its habits of growth vary; it can crawl like a climber or be a good-sized tree in its own right, when it can be enjoyed for its shade. It has always been usual to have a fig tree in one’s garden; it gave shade as well as fruit, and one could sit under it in peace. “*Each man shall dwell under his own vine, under his own fig-tree, undisturbed.*” (Mic. 4:4 NEB)

The fruit of the fig tree is not really a fruit at all; it is a large, fleshy, hollow receptacle which contains the flowers. We know about the fig tree’s unreliable fruit-bearing habits, from our own experience and from our Lord’s disappointment at finding a fig tree with a great show of leaves but no fruit. It probably reminded him of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and he “cursed” it roundly. “*And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward, for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.*” (Matt. 21:19)

The fig, the vine and the olive are the most important fruit trees in the Holy Land. It was known as being “*a land of wheat and barley, of vines, fig-trees, and pomegranates.*” (Deut. 8:8 NEB)

The Flowers and Fruits of the Bible
John Chancellor

A TREE PLANTED BY A RIVER

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3 NKJV)

Trees play an important part of the world in which we live. The Amazon Rain forest is known as “The lungs of the world,” for converting carbon dioxide to supply 20% of the World’s oxygen, they and the hedgerows hold the soil and its nutrients in place, can act as a windbreaks and hold in moisture. Apart from this, trees are good for fruit, like the apple, pear, fig and other fruit. Olive oil comes from olives grown on trees. In manufacturing, trees are used to make the paper in our Bibles, and for all manner of furniture and building materials. Wood can be burnt and made into charcoal pellets, to make electricity. The latest idea is a way to bury carbon rather than to release it in the atmosphere. No wonder they seem a major part of the plans into going carbon neutral and offsetting the use of energy in our homes, cars, and any air travel we undertake.

Trees in Eden

God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food...and indeed it was very good.” (Genesis 1:29,31 NKJV) Also Gen. 2:8-10 (NKJV) tells us “The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.” So we see, that trees were created, and our first earthly biological parents, Adam and Eve, were in the garden in Eden and through it ran a river.

Trees commonly picture people. One example of this is the parable in Judges 9 when the trees went to find a tree to be their king from the olive and fig and vine before settling on a much lesser tree. Ecclesiastes 11:3 likens a falling tree to the death of a human being. Hence Psalm One uses this same picture language. Those, the godly, the righteous being like a tree planted by rivers they have good leaves and are producing fruit. This

group consults the word of God, the Bible, daily. It contrasts them to the ungodly who are like chaff, dried loose grass being blown by the wind. Water is necessary for a tree to stay alive, have good leaves and produce fruit. Being on a riverbank means there is plenty of moisture for the roots to pick up the water and nutrients in the soil often brought from upstream. Think of mount Hermon with its snows and rain leading down to the sea of Galilee and the Jordan river with the nutrients flowing down from upstream. The opposite to that picture would be a desert.

John Edgar in his booklet "*A Tree Planted by the Rivers of Water*" likens the growth of a tree from a seed to producing fruit to those verses in 2 Peter 1 where new creatures super-add to their faith a root, the fortitude of a stem, the branches of knowledge, the pruning of self-control, the patience of a leaf, the budding of godliness and piety, the blossoming of brotherly love and fruit of agape love. Edgar was a doctor in Glasgow before the First World War and therefore had a scientific background with a good knowledge of Biology. Nevertheless gardens are something most British people love and understand as is borne out by the lyrics of Jimmie Rodgers. "There is joy in the spring when the birds begin to sing in an English country garden."

The Root of Faith

A new tree starts with a seed in the ground. Not all ground is good ground as the parable of the sower says. There are weeds and rocks and hard ground. Faith is the starting point and the root begins to emerge as Rom. 5:1 says being justified by faith we have peace with God, and we are saved by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:8) The seed meets the moisture of water to produce roots that then can absorb more water and take in the nutrients in the soil. Water is about 75% of the weight of most plants. It reminds one of the Samaritan woman at the well to whom Jesus said that those drinking of living water shall never thirst but will be as a well of water springing up to everlasting life and those that worship God shall worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4) This truth can be partly, at least, attributed to the word of God, working on that seed and the first little radicle or root.

Stem of Fortitude

Eventually if there is sufficient water and hopefully minerals, the first little stem will be produced as well as the roots and it will appear above the ground for the first time. The root of faith now needs to be able to survive in the open air. This can be a challenging time for any plant. Some small plants get eaten by slugs, snails, or birds. So also the new creature

must have the courage of their conviction to survive in the World and keep the faith and even speak up for their faith, despite the battering of creatures and weather conditions. This stem will eventually grow into a trunk. A young plant will need to bend in the wind, but as it gets stronger and it continues to uptake water and nutrients it will be able to survive adversity.

Branches of Knowledge

Every Christian requires knowledge. The knowledge of God's plans and purposes; his character, his requirements, advice for daily living. Other knowledge of the world that helps us understand Biblical language, history, geography, even languages and more. There are many branches on a tree hence many types of knowledge. Peter advises the Christian to grow in grace and knowledge. (2 Pet. 3:18) Paul saw the value of it and counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his lord. (Phil. 3:8)

In due time all will come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) of Jesus who gave himself a ransom to be testified in due time, for as the Old Testament testifies; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Hab. 2:14)

The Pruning of Self-control

But knowledge is not the end point although it does provide a structure on the road to producing fruit. In fact some branches will need pruning as does any tree. Lower branches often need pruning as without sufficient light and space they will not be useful, others grow too high. Then there are diseased ones or dry ones. So the Christian submits to the pruning and chastening of our heavenly Father and forgoes growing less useful knowledge. There is no reason we cannot endeavour to prune ourselves. Paul says we can judge ourselves as well as being judged by the chastening of our heavenly Father. (1 Cor. 11:31-32) The scripture also warns us that knowledge can puff up (1 Cor. 8:1) for it is love that builds up. Thus the branches are now nice and strong and ready and in good shape for the next stage.

Patience of Leaves

We all have need of patience to do the will of God that we might be receivers of the promise of God. (Heb. 10:36) Patience is a perfecting work. (James 1:4) The scriptures clearly indicate that patience has its part in the process of becoming a mature new creature in Christ Jesus. But how can we relate that to a part of the tree? John Edgar suggests it is the

leaves, that can be seen being buffeted on a tree on the windiest days. They move and bend in every direction but remain attached to the tree. It is like abiding in the vine. (John 15:4) In nature, leaves do well and remain healthy and green, so long as they are supplied with sufficient moisture from the root going into the sap of the tree and sunlight makes them green by photosynthesis.

Leaves are the key to absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The underside of a leaf has pores called stomata for this function. The plant splits carbon dioxide into carbon and oxygen. The carbon forms 50% of the weight of a tree and appears to bulk it up and stiffen it. The oxygen is needful for animals as well as humankind to breathe. Therefore the leaf means the tree can be a blessing to those they come into contact with as the Christian should be “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14) and “the salt of the earth.” (Matt. 5:13) And the Church now should bless them that curse it and despitely use them as it says in Luke 6:28. As in the light of the world picture, leaves need the light to do their work. Additionally they provide cover for animals to hide from those that would prey on them.

The Buds of Piety

However much use the greenness of a tree is, and there are some gorgeous looking green trees, the purpose here is to bring forth fruit. The next stage is the buds of piety. They are the foundation of fruit. They are hard and green at the start. John Edgar likened these buds to some Scottish Presbyterians of the Victorian era who were thought to be hard parents and not always the most patient and affectionate.

Reverence for God is a requirement. 1 Tim. 4:7-8 (NKJV) says “reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” I bought a large bag of narcissus bulbs in the autumn, which I planted out too late and tightly packed in a large container. Although many gave a blaze of late spring colour some only made it to the bud stage on slightly smaller stems. It was my fault not to tend them properly in a timely manner. So it is a disappointment not to progress and blossom into brotherly love.

Blossoming into Brotherly Love

Blossoms are a beautiful part of God’s creation, full of bright colours. Fruit trees with blossoms are a good sign. A promise that fruit is possible. But insects are needed to pollinate the blossoms from other blossoms.

Hence the hum of insects is also a good sign. It seems this joyful colour needs sharing. So brotherly love is something that is shared between family members. Heb. 13:1 says, “let brotherly love (Greek *philadelphia*) continue.” After that it says be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Romans 12:10 guides “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” Peter and Paul showed brotherly love in all their ministry.

Blossoms only get us so far. Think of all the beautiful false blossoming bushes there are. But it is the fruit of *agape* love that ought to be the aim. One Greek and English-speaking student of the Bible said one was not higher than another just a different form of love. Nevertheless for this analogy it will be assumed that it is the highest, and surely the purest form of love. The love that God showed in sending His son even if it meant His son Jesus dying on the cross, it even extends to loving one’s enemies. (John 3:16-17; Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27,35)

Fruit of *Agape* Love

Even fruit must develop from small hard fruit to large mature fruit. Often on an apple tree if there is a lot of fruit developing on a tree and sometimes three apples growing from one point of a small branch one is often smaller in size and weak. Other enemies come from the birds that would peck the sweet fruit or some insects like caterpillars or any manner of diseases like mildew. Nutrient deficiency can be an issue such as a lack of calcium.

In the message to the church of Ephesus, it commends that church for its patience and work. However they did not continue to *agape* love as they first did. This a warning to them and all.

There is something else there too in the fruit. There are the seeds. If the fruit falls to the ground it has the possibility and knowledge to grow into another tree, as it says “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die.” (John 12:24) See what our Lord Jesus accomplished in his death! It was the birth of the Church in this Gospel age (Christian era). This process continues and will continue into the Messianic or Millennial age.

Modern Israel regathered and trees

“He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” (Isa. 27:6)

There is one small country which has really used the tree. Modern Israel has had an extensive tree planting otherwise known as afforestation

scheme. The Ottoman Empire had left the land very much poorer for trees, having plundered that resource.

Theodore Herzl in about 1900 stated “at present the land is poor and neglected: the slopes of the hills are bare, the places with famous names are sad piles of debris and the fields lie fallow. The Holy Land is a wilderness.” Chaim Weizmann said the land was covered “with rocks and marshes and sand.” Something needed doing. The Holy Land has been planted with 250m trees and since 1948 the percentage of land with trees has increased from 2% to 8.5%. This has enabled land unsuitable for farming like the rocky hills and semi-arid places to be planted. The marshes were planted with eucalyptus. The Yatir Forest on the edge of the Negev in southern Israel is the largest forest in Israel, allowing in some parts for grazing for the Bedouin which also aids fire management.

Hence large-scale tree planting has reduced soil erosion, reduced moisture evaporation, helped the wildlife and prepared the soil for more diverse plants. The economy has benefitted from logging and it has employed a lot of people, as well as by putting more oxygen into the atmosphere.

In addition non-present Jews all around the world have been able to have trees planted there by some schemes in their ancient homeland. This just goes to show how trees picture people.

Jesus’ words of fruit bearing

Jesus used the tree in his ministry. He said a tree is known by its fruit (Matt. 12:33) and every tree which does not bear good fruit should be cut down and burnt. (Matt. 3:10) This was a warning to the Pharisees and the nation of Israel. He warned them the kingdom of God would be taken from them. (Matt. 21:43) This is what happened, and the Gospel message was opened out to include the Gentiles by Peter and Paul.

Jesus told us how we were to do this. (John 15:1,5) He said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

The warning states it is possible to bring forth bad fruit or no fruit. The Pharisees were regularly advised of this and we can take this as a warning now. Our task is to bring forth the fruits of the spirit and as in the parable of the sower it can be thirtyfold, sixtyfold or a hundredfold. This can be done if we abide in Jesus, and his words abide in us. (John 15:7)

Trees in the Kingdom

The tree of life appears once more in the last book of the Bible. In Rev. 22:1-2 it is found on both riverbanks with pure, crystal clear water running through it. Here the tree brings forth twelve sorts of fruit and it clearly heals the nations. What more perfect picture can we have.

Its hardly surprising then that in other passages in the Bible when all appears harmony that trees and water are used to describe that version of harmony and balance. Ezekiel 47, which is with those last chapters of the prophet who was carried away to captivity in Babylon, describes the building and dimensions of what is oft called “The Third Temple” wrote “along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.” (Ezek. 47:12 NKJV) Nehemiah who played a major role in restoring Jerusalem and the law after the Babylonian captivity directed the people at the time of the feast of tabernacles to, “go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.” (Neh. 8:15) This holy feast was shared among all in the nation to remind them of when they all lived in tents and is the last of the three great feasts when all the harvests had finally been gathered in. Nehemiah understood rebuilding and this pictures a time still yet future.

NAC



PISGAH

A hill in Moab, opposite Jericho, (Num. 21:20) whence Balaam, (Num. 23:14) and Moses saw the land of Israel. (Deut. 3:27; 34:1)

Concise Bible Dictionary, Cambridge Bible

Mount Nebo is the highest among a handful of Pisgah summits; an arid cluster of hilltops on the western edge of the Transjordanian plateau.

Wikipedia

Mount Nebo. The exact spot whence Moses gazed is unknown, but Nebo is a site about which there is no dispute. The name belongs to a knoll “with traces of a ring dolmens on it.” Major Conder first observed them. It is a flat summit with a narrow ridge running out west between Heshbon and Medeba; on this ridge a height rises—the highest peak of all—called Siaghah; this is Pisgah. Below, on the north, are the “Springs of Moses,” as the Arabs call a stream that flows through a picturesque valley and falls over the cliff into a flowery and fern-decked hollow. These springs were called the Baths of Moses in the Middle Ages.

Palestine Past and Present, L Valentine

COME ALL YE SAINTS TO PISGAH’S MOUNTAIN—A HYMN



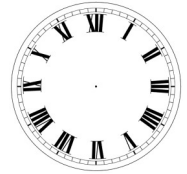
COME, all ye saints, to Pisgah’s mountain,
 Come see the view beyond the tide:
 Millennial Canaan is before us,
 Soon we’ll sing on the other side.
 O! there see the “white throne of glory,”
 And crowns which the saints then shall gain;
 And all who shall love Christ’s appearing
 Shall be blessed by his glorious reign.

Chorus-

*O! the prospect! it is so transporting,
 Reapers, hasten the gath’ring, we pray;
 We rejoice in the glory that’s promised,
 And the dawn of millennial day.*



Thence springs of life will e’er be flowing,
 Robing the earth in living green,
 Visions of beauty rise before us
 When the King and the saints shall reign.
 Soon our conflicts and toils will be ended;
 We’ll be tried and tempted no more,
 And mankind of all ages and nations
 Shall be blessed in that triumphant hour.



Faith now beholds salvation’s river,
 Gliding from underneath the throne,
 Bearing its life to whomsoever
 Will return to his Father’s home.
 They will walk ’mid the trees by the rivers,
 With the friends they have loved by their side;
 They will sing the glad songs of salvation,
 And be ready to follow their guide.



These are based from the original words of J W Dadmun (1819-1890) who was a pastor in a Methodist Episcopal Church.

Here are some Bible verses which are thought to have inspired the writer:
 Deut. 3:27-28 Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes... But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.

Exod. 3:17 I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites...

Rev. 20:11 I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it.

2 Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Rev. 20:4 I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Gal. 6:7-9 Be not deceived...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Rev. 14:14-16 I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying...thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

Matt. 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Deut. 3:16-17 (YLT) To the Reubenite and...Gadite I have given from Gilead even unto...the plain, and the Jordan, and the border, from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, the salt sea, under the springs of Pisgah, at the [sun]-rising.

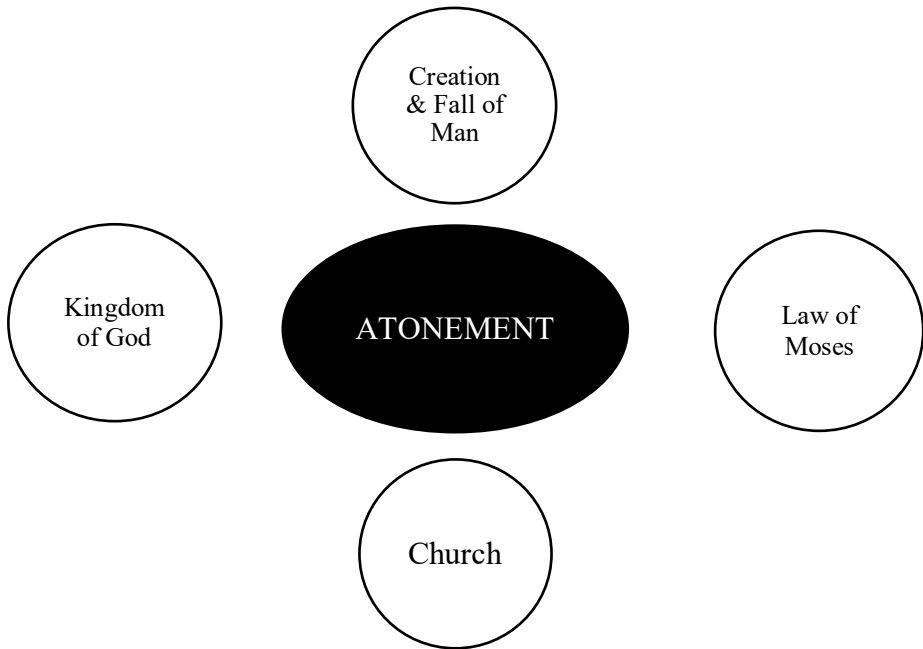
Rev. 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Ezek. 47:7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

Isa. 35:10 The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness.

ATONEMENT

Central to the Christian faith is the subject of the atonement and it is said that all other teachings radiate from this one fact of faith.



Creation and Fall of Man

There is ample evidence around us of the creation which God who is the creator, the architect of all that we see, initiated in the beginning or when time began. The very first act of creation was to bring forth the one who is named the Amen—so let it be—in Rev. 3:14. “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” 2 Cor.1:20—“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

The same is named the Word in John 1:1-2 “In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a god was the Word. This was in a beginning with the God.” (Diaglott Interlineary word for word) In Col. 1:15 we read that he is the first born of all creation. See also Prov. 8:22-31.

So, we see that God’s first act was to create a new life in the person of His son who we have come to know as the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an essential uniqueness of God that He alone is the giver of life. It is one

thing to take of materials and create an object which in some cases may look lifelike but which does not move, does not breathe, does not see, does not hear, does not speak. It is quite another to take materials and create a living being.

Such was the case when God said to His son, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (Gen. 1:26) God formed man of the dust of the ground, He made a body and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; He quickened that body of Adam, and man became a living soul. (Gen. 2:7)

Adam and Eve were created in perfection of body and mind—there was nothing slack about their creation, no imperfection of any sort. They had also the mind unique to man in which they were in the image of God—they could think, they could reason, they could communicate, they could create. They also, by reason of thought, could choose, select what to do, obey or disobey—they had free will, freedom of choice, freedom of action within the constraints of their environment and abilities.

However, along came Satan who had chosen to follow evil ways, seeking to usurp the authority of God. He got at Eve with the question: “yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?...Ye shall not surely die.” (Gen. 3:1,4) Eve was thus tempted, beguiled. She saw the tree was good for food, she saw the tree was pleasant to the eyes, she desired to become wise.

Eve fell for it and ate, gave the fruit also to Adam who ate and in doing so disobeyed his Creator and suffered the consequences. The elements of imperfection began to take root in their lives; death passed also on their children, their descendants. The curse of death: the wrath of God. (Eph. 2:3) “In Adam all die.” (1 Cor. 15:22) Paradise lost.

The Law of Moses

For 4,000 years this situation continued, but in that time God manifested through the law He gave to Moses the principle of righteousness, of justice and redemption and a plan of salvation whereby He might show His compassion and love for mankind, His creation.

For every form of transgression, of sin, there was a commandment and a sacrifice for expiation of that sin; through the shedding of blood, in which is represented the life. Hence a life given, a life poured out, an atonement; it involved the giving of a life to redeem the living. Atonement was the

great character of the law, but the weakness of it was that the sacrifices did not have a correspondence with the transgressors. It pointed the way to a ransom sacrifice, to holiness, to righteousness and reconciliation, to true reverence and worship. In the law reference to atonement occurs 70 times.

The law also only applied to Israel and so a greater sacrifice was necessary to be effective for all mankind. (Deut. 6:4-9; 10:12-15)

The great Day of Atonement was celebrated every year in October. It was a very special event and the only time that the high priest entered the most holy, beyond the veil that separated the ark of the covenant from the holy place where the altar of incense was and the seven branch golden candlestick and the table of shewbread. The high priest could not enter the most holy at any other time “that he die not.” (Lev. 16:2,13)

The high priest also had to dress in linen and make a sin offering for himself and for his family by the sacrifice of a bullock with incense of burning coals from the fire of the altar, Lev. 16:6,11,14 then sprinkle the blood upon the mercy seat and before it seven times. Then he would take the blood of the first goat (upon which the Lord Jesus’s lot fell) and sacrificed it for the sins of all the people and do likewise as an atonement for them all—here atonement meaning a covering—their sins were covered. (Heb. 10:14)

The Levitical sacrifices covered the sins of Israel to cleanse them until and in anticipation of the Lord’s sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)

Afterwards the high priest laid his hands on the head of the second of the two goats, the live goat, and confessed over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel; their transgression, their sins, putting them on the head of the goat which was then led away into the wilderness and let go, bearing away all their sins into an uninhabited land. (Lev. 16:22)

When all this was complete the high priest would go into the tabernacle and change his clothes, leave them there and wash and put on his normal clothes of office and make a burnt offering for himself and the people.

All this was done on the 10th day of the 7th month, the Day of Atonement of each year it was held and for nearly 1,000 years until the captivity into Babylon.

The Lord's Sacrifice and The Church

Our Lord fulfilled the requirements of the atonement for the sin of the world by his death on the cross. (1 Tim.1:15; 2:5-6 & Rom. 5:10-11) Being perfect, that is without sin, Jesus had no need to make a sin offering for himself.

Because of Adam's transgression Jesus paid a corresponding sacrifice so that as in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive. By one man, Adam, sin entered into the world and death by sin, for all have sinned; by one man, Jesus, the grace of God has come so that by belief in Jesus might come eternal life and the righteousness of God.

Now is the dispensation of grace through faith to the Church of God. Jesus was delivered for our sins and was raised again for our justification. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 4:25; 5:1)

Jesus was raised by God and ascended into the holy place of the presence of God there to appear for us. (Heb. 9:24-28) Without our Lord's sacrifice the Church of God could not have come into being; neither could he be the head of that Church which was kept secret from the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the days of the apostles by the preaching of the gospel—which is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. (Rom. 1:16)

To the Church there rests the promises of God—the reward of faithful life in Christ. The apostles expressed this in the words of 2 Tim. 4:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:4 and 2 Thess. 2:13-14. This glorious reward, the hope of the Church, would not have been possible unless the Lord had made an atonement for sin and redeemed and purchased the Church with his precious blood. (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:7&11-14)

Kingdom of God

Before our Lord came there were men and women of faith who were subject to all sorts of experiences, too many to recount but we have a summary in Hebrews 11. To these God gave promises of a future and they died in faith holding to those promises. Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them..." (Heb.11:10,13)

The faithfulness of Jesus to God's Will, will enable God to keep His

promises to those heroes of faith. What a joy will be theirs. Both Jew and Arab claim Abraham as their father, so one can imagine what work of reconciliation he will do between these two as also Isaac was the father of Jacob and Esau.

Jesus also died a ransom for all to be testified in due course. It will be the turn of the nations to experience the mercy and kindness of God when Jesus comes to liberate mankind from the power of the Adversary and above all to raise the dead and restore life to this world. (Isa. 25:6-9)

The wonders for mankind in the Kingdom of God would not have been possible but for the atoning work of grace. For 1,000 years the life-giving benefits of Christ's sacrifice will be available to all who acknowledge him and prove their loyalty and faithfulness. They will not be subject any more to the evil powers of darkness, Satan and the like, who will suffer destruction. Those who will not acknowledge Jesus will suffer a second death.

Thus restored mankind will enjoy the blessings of paradise regained when all the former things are passed away. This all made possible by the atonement gained by the sacrifice our Lord Jesus Christ made—a ransom for all to be testified in due time.

ANC



IN GOD'S ETERNAL SPRING

The petals of a lovely rose
 May fall and die at summer's close
 And grief we feel for that brief hour –
 For it had been a lovely flower.

It lies at rest on dewy grass —
 So fragrant still to all who pass,
 E'en tho it die...our Father knows
 That SPRING will resurrect the rose.

And so when death makes all seem vain
 Mankind like flowers shall live again.
 "All in their graves" shall hear their King.
 And rise in God's eternal Spring.

Poems of the Way



THE GATHERING HOME OF SAINTS

Part 8

THANKING THE MINISTERING ANGELS



O could we hear the sound of many wings of angels' flight on wondrous mission bent. Could we but see each messenger speed forth, to aid, to strengthen, comfort and support? Could we perceive the interest of a spirit world, some rising, some descending, all sent forth along the sunlight shafts of love divine...breaking through clouds...opening prison doors? With ease and grace their wonders they perform...whispering words behind us...beckoning on, guarding, guiding, watching every step of every saint, to keep in all their ways...beholding constantly a Father's face. Before we cry, they take our hand to bear us up, and lift us high above the stumbling stones of earth, beyond the things of time and sense to glory realms, eternity's domain, where dwells our Lord. See, he prepares, within His Father's House, a place reserved, (oh blessed thought!) in heaven for me. Sweet are such messages of love. Beautiful the flight of those who bring them to my longing heart, and loan to me their wings.

This debt of gratitude and love we carry over to the scenes above, when, one sweet day, we will meet those wondrous beings who helped us in the way and wait their charge to greet. Should we repay their selfless ministry with praise, and wonder at their patience with our ways, then will they smile, their holy faces shine, and each confess, "God's be the praise, not mine."

How intimately will each angel know our path, our past, persistence both for good and ill, our petulance and puerile fantasies, and our delight to know that Sovereign Will of God. That character peculiar to me, and all that makes me just the way I am, my deep desires, my inbred state of sin, that inconsistent mixture dark and light, reflected in my struggling within. How wonderful those holy sons of light whose flight from heaven's courts was made for me, who readily descend to sinful earth to grapple with dark powers to save me harm. Yet their successes apprehended not by our poor minds, we rarely even notice that smoothed path, nor sense their effort, vigilance, or zeal in faithful ministrations for our sake.

An angel's mind accepts such poor acclaim. They joy to do it in the Father's Name, and recognised or not, they serve the same. And do they each have name, as Gabriel, this great and noble host of holy minds? If they know joy in heaven when prodigals return, what other deep emotions

fill their being? How do they view the wearing low of saints? How did they bear the sight of Calvary? Their memories reach back before the worlds were formed, their joy and glad surprise upon creation's dawn to look upon that man in His dear likeness made. How deep their sorrow when that work of God displayed fell to the Serpent's plan, and man became depraved and turned his back on life and its great Source.

Did we bring angels joy when first we turned our minds towards the Light? They who had known for countless ages past that some great height to the Creator's work was planned, though what it was they could not understand. Yet with desire they stooped to see the first faint glimmer of this mystery. And when the wraps of time at last unsealed were lifted, oh what joy that act revealed among that host who peered to see, but what would their emotion be when they saw *me*? There may have been moments in the work of grace when there was a frown upon my angel's face, yet such was his trust on wisdom divine (if only that trust had ever been mine!) He swiftly would fly to the Father above, and there, face to face that communion of love, and swift his return my responses to prove, then back came that smile. With patience he would wait while earnest in prayer my heart was outpoured. Then he would open my eyes, and the answer was there! Oh how he adored those moments of truth when Grace was explored! And so did my Lord Whose eyes he became.

The heart of an angel. Oh brethren, what pure mind was solemnly entrusted with my care? What holy noble character is charged right now, according to that perfect will of God, to hold me and support, that heavenly design in me fulfil? What fitting messenger of so great a love would God commission for salvation's heir? I long to see that being whose delight is in my Lord, His glory and His work. Who never cease to proclaim His worth, His holiness, His wisdom, and His praise, who loves all that my Father loves, His ways, His character, His endless days.

I close my eyes and see that ladder linking me with heaven's realm. Above it stands My God, Who looking now upon this stony place that makes my bed, sends messages of love that meet my need. Was Jacob first to glimpse the truth of Romans 8:28? "All things" in heaven, "all things" on earth that touch my life...So many working even now towards my victory and His joy. A heavenly collusion is this hour involved beyond my mind to comprehend. In varied guise the messengers appear. One day a brother dear to me, though now passed on, while passing through a darkness of the soul, became aware his cat was occupied in tapping with his paw a screwed up piece of paper at his feet. "Read this!" it was as if it

said. And stooping he picked up and then spread out the tiny scrap, to find thereon a text in his own hand of days before. More fitting message could not be framed for that dark hour. In varied ways His messengers co-work in that great purpose of our God. Oh could we hear that sound of many wings of angels' flight on wondrous mission bent. What stimulus to faith! What comfort of great love! What debt we owe to Him Who sends, and they who bear these promises of grace.

I long to look upon my angel's face, and for him thank my God.
DH



THE SANDAL-WOOD

*How strange the story of the Sandal-wood,
That grows in distant lands beyond the sea!
'Tis said this curious tree perfumes the axe
That lays it low, and from its riven heart
There flows a wondrous fragrance, sweet and rare,
Oft times to incense ground and powdered fine,
Its burning fills with languorous scent the room;
And yet, for centuries the tree might stand
But yield no perfume on the tropic air.
It needs must fall, its very heart be crushed,
The sweetness of its odours to reveal.*



*Dear Lord, O make me like the sandal-wood,
O, may I pour Love's fragrance on the hand
That wounds me so, and help me realize
Without a bruised and humbled heart I'd be
Unfitted for the Master Workman's use!
As sandal-wood oft cools the fettered brow,
Let me refresh and soothe the anguished mind;
When fires burn fiercest, may my presence be
Like sweetest incense on the evening breeze,
Or like God's angel in Gethsemane,
To comfort, strengthen, calm, inspire and bless!*

Poems of The Way

WE WILL ALL FALL ASLEEP

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall all fall asleep, but we shall not all be changed in a moment.” (1 Corinthians 15:51,52 RVIC)

This is a familiar text, but the rendering above is a surprising one—surprising, in that it differs notably from the common versions rendering. However, as the RVIC footnotes show, this reading is well attested.

Upon close inspection it seems vital. The common versions say “we shall not all sleep.” However, the Greek word for “sleep” here, *koimethesometha*, means not a state of repose, as in sleep, but the act of falling into sleep—“fall asleep.” It is Strong’s word number 2838. Another form of the word *ekoimethe*, Strong’s number 2837, which was used to describe the death of Stephen in Acts 7:60, “he fell asleep.” This describes not the state of death, but the act of dying, falling into the sleep of death.

Thus, with the word “not” in the 1 Cor. 15:51 phrase, before “all fall asleep,” Paul would be saying that not all the saints would die. That would fit nicely with the traditional view of the rapture, and perhaps that is the reason the text was changed at some time, away from the original intent of Paul.

With the word “not” omitted in this phrase, Paul’s words affirm that all the saints must die in the flesh, in order, to be raised to life in the spirit. A little reflection indicates that this text, in the original, before becoming corrupted, is unique. It is the only text in the New Testament that declaratively affirms that all of those called to a heavenly reward must die in the flesh, in order to receive their life in the spirit.

The word “not” does appear in the text, but not in the phrase discussed above. The word “not,” in the better manuscripts, appears in the next phrase: “we shall not all be changed in a moment.” Those who die after the return of Christ are changed “in the twinkling of an eye” when they die. But those who died long ago, before the return of Christ, are required to rest in the sleep of death, awaiting the end of the age.

In 1 Cor. 15:52, Paul used the word “raised” for those who died earlier and slept, awaiting the resurrection. He uses the word “changed” for those who remain until the return of Christ, and thereafter complete their course. “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the living who continue into the presence of Christ)

NOTICES

**CONVENTION
30 OCTOBER—
1 NOVEMBER
2020**

**HIGH LEIGH
CONFERENCE
CENTRE**

For early enquiries
please contact

Dorota Pilch—
dorota.broda@gmail.com

For a draft programme
Nicholas Charcharos—
n.a.charcharos@gmail.com

**CONFERENCE
CENTRE DUE
TO OPEN
1 OCT**

**Now Shipping
The RVIC (Rev. Version
Improved & Corrected)**

The RVIC, 50 years in the making, is now available. This 8½ x 11 (inch) Bible of 918 pages comes in an elegant, superior grade (German meriva) black leather binding, with gold stamp and gold gilding. This 2020 edition includes the latest textual updates for the Old and New Testaments available today.

The goal of the RVIC is to affordably make available the most accurate English translation of the Bible.

The price is reduced to encourage orders. Comparable published Bibles of this quality sell for \$70 or more. You may secure a copy for \$30, plus shipping.

Contact:

Pastoral Bible Institute
The PBI@comcast.net
001-888 784-3724 — 8 am-5 pm Pacific Time
Monday-Saturday
ThePBI@comcast.net
www.heraldmag.org

IN THE WILDERNESS

Be still, and murmur not, poor heart,
When God shall lead thee to a “desert
place,”
And bid thee dwell apart;
If ravens in the wilderness
Did feed the servant of the Lord, will He
For thee, His child, do less?
Nor fear, sad heart, its loneliness,-
Hath He not said, “I never will forsake
Nor leave thee comfortless?”
Have faith, thy Master may design
To fit thee thus for Kingdom work and
bliss,-
And wilt thou then repine?

Be patient, let His will be done;
Be calm, be strong, that He may finish
there
The work He hath begun.
“A little while,” He soon will come,
And say to thee, “It is enough, my child,
My faithful one, come home!”

Poems of the Way

shall be changed.” (1 Cor. 15:52) That all the saints complete their course in death is consistent with Jesus’ promise in Revelation 2:10, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

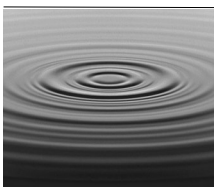
Augustine of Hippo, one of the revered figures of Christian history, is of interest here in that he reflected this same understanding. He was born on November 13, 354, and died on August 28, 430. He is the well-known author of a Christian classic, “*The City of God*.” The Church had already changed in doctrine by his day. But on this point, Augustine affirms the proper view.

This has been brought out in recent years by some studies by Robert Virgil, of the San Francisco area. He states, “Concerning Augustine’s view that it is necessary for all saints to die, even if they survive into the time of the Lord’s presence, see *The City of God*, Book XX, section 20. This reference system should work regardless of which edition is used.

“Augustine also uses the manuscript variation of 1 Cor. 15:51—‘we shall all sleep’—and says, ‘not even the saints shall be quickened to immortality unless they first die, however briefly; and consequently they shall not be exempt from resurrection which is preceded by sleep, however brief.’”

We Will All Fall Asleep “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall all fall asleep, but we shall not all be changed, in a moment.” (1 Cor. 15:51,52 RVIC)

April / June 2020 —People’s Paper, Australia



In the center of the whirlpool,
While the waters rush around
There’s a place of perfect stillness,
Though with turmoil it is bound.

All is calm, and all is quiet,
Scarcely e’en a sense of sound.
So with us, despite the conflict,
When in Christ, his peace is found.

songs of the nightingale

**Published by the Bible Fellowship Union
12 Stanley Gardens, Tring, HP23 4BS, U.K.**

email—editor@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk
www.biblefellowshipunion.co.uk www.biblestudymonthly.uk