

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

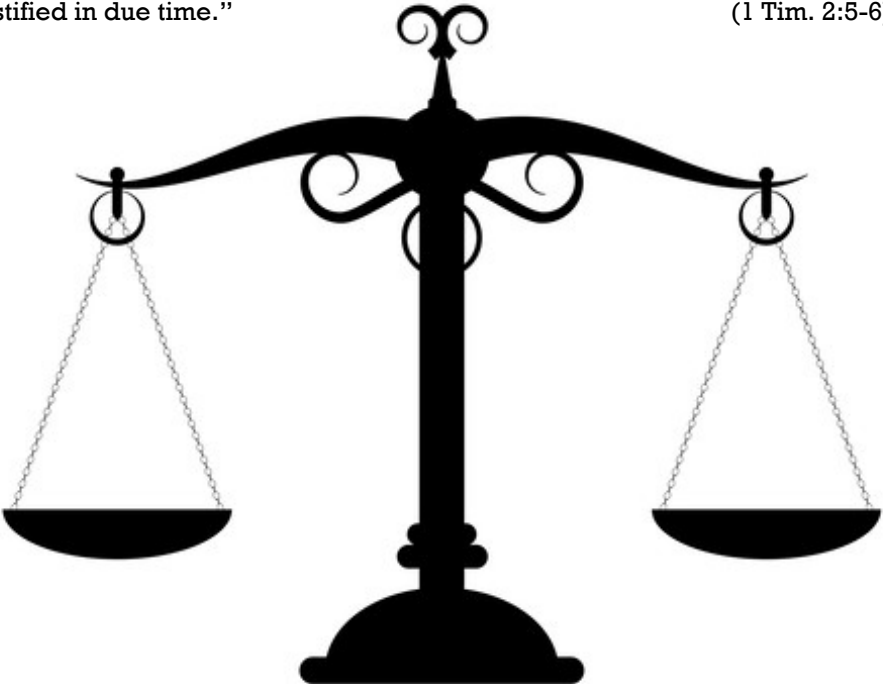
Volume 99 Issue 1

January / February 2022

Contents

Thought for the Month	2
The Plan of God in Brief—Study 7	4
Love Casts out Fear	9
His Calling	11
Let the Word Dwell Richly	15
Daniel in Babylon—Pt. 1	21
A Sign and a Witness—Pt. 1	25
I will sing of my Redeemer—A hymn	32
The Bible's Song of Love—Pt. 3c	34
Notices	38
Patient Submission	39
O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day	40

“Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom (corresponding price) for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Tim. 2:5-6)



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

Overseas Renewal Notice with this issue

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Beloved! we should love each other; because love is from God; and every one who loves has been begotten by God and knows God. He who does not love, does not know God; because God is love. By this the love of God to us was manifested, that God sent forth His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that He loved us, and sent forth His Son as a propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:7-10 Diaglott)

God demonstrated his love to us in sending his son Jesus into the world to be a ransom, a corresponding price for the sin of Adam and therefore the whole human race. Jesus, of his own freewill paid that ransom-price by his death on the cross nearly two thousand years ago and it remains as effective as ever. In so doing also showing divine economy "for as by *one* man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of *one* shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:19)

Christians now knowing the love of God to them, reciprocate and endeavour to grow closer to him and understand His ways, His Plans and His purposes and can now spend time developing divine characteristics such as love through his spirit given to them.

Jesus, having paid this ransom for all, in due time the restitution of all things will begin. This was pictured by the Jubilee in the Mosaic law.

(Lev. 25:8-17) It was not the sort of modern Jubilee like there was for The Queen with her silver, golden, and diamond Jubilees or the upcoming platinum Jubilee in February. The Jubilee meant all lands had to be restored to their original owners and all sold to be servants and slaves received their freedom back. Sadly this was never fully implemented and many failed to get back their land and lives. (Amos 2:6-7; Mic. 2:2) Yet the principle remains. The word of God promises that it will be and God cannot lie.

A balancing up of the scales is shown at the end of Isaiah 19. Old enemies like Assyria, Egypt and Israel will be in harmony with God and each other. Assyria in many ways representing all countries to the north of Israel, and Egypt all nations to the south of Israel. One imagines at that time there will not be the large inequalities between nations as we see today. And the striving there has been to grow economies around the world, that appears to be leaving such a mark upon the climate, will cease to be seen and competition with stronger countries dominating other countries would cease too.

“Perfect love casts out fear.” (1 John 4:18 NKJV) Understanding the love of God should take away some of the fear and dread any may have of the plan of God.

*My song shall be of Jesus,
His mercy crowns my days:
He fills my cup with blessings,
And tunes my heart to praise.
My song shall be of Jesus,
The precious Lamb of God,
Who gave Himself, my ransom,
Who bought me with His blood.*

*My song shall be of Jesus,
When, sitting at His feet,
I call to mind His goodness
In meditation sweet.
My song shall be of Jesus,
Whatever ill betide;
I'll sing the grace that saves me
And keeps me at His side.*

*My song shall be of Jesus,
While pressing on my way
To reach the blissful region
Of pure and endless day.
And when my soul shall enter
The gate of Eden fair,
A song of praise to Jesus
I'll sing for ever there.*

*Bible Students Hymnal
Fanny Crosby*

THE PLAN OF GOD IN BRIEF

STUDY 7—Ransom and Restoration

“For to this end Christ died, and lived again, that He might be Lord [Ruler, Controller] of both the dead and the living.” (Rom. 14:9 RV)

That is to say, the object of our Lord’s death and resurrection was not merely to bless and rule over and restore the living of mankind, but to give Him authority over, or full control of, the dead as well as the living, insuring the benefits of His ransom as much to the one as to the other. He “gave Himself a ransom [corresponding price] for all,” in order that He might bless all, and give to every man an individual trial for life. To claim that He gave a “ransom for *all*,” and yet to claim that only a mere handful of the ransomed ones will ever receive any benefit from it, is absurd; for it would imply either that God accepted the ransom-price and then unjustly refused to grant the release of the redeemed, or else that the Lord, after redeeming all, was either unable or unwilling to carry out the original benevolent design. The unchangeableness of the divine plans, no less than the perfection of the divine justice and love, repels and contradicts such a thought, and gives us assurance that the original and benevolent plan, of which the “ransom for all” was the basis, will be fully carried out in God’s “due time,” and will bring to faithful believers the blessing of release from the Adamic condemnation and an opportunity to return to the rights and liberties of sons of God, as enjoyed before sin and the curse.

Let the actual benefits and results of the ransom be clearly seen, and all objections to its being of universal application must vanish. The “ransom for all” given by “the man Christ Jesus” does not give or guarantee everlasting life or blessing to any man; but it does guarantee to every man *another opportunity or trial for life everlasting*. The first trial of man, which resulted in the loss of the blessings at first conferred, is really turned into a blessing of experience to the loyal-hearted, by reason of the *ransom* which God has provided. But the fact that men are ransomed from the first penalty does not guarantee that they may not, when individually tried for everlasting life, fail to render the obedience without which none will be permitted to live everlastingly. Man, by reason of present experience with sin and its bitter penalty, will be fully forewarned; and when, as a result of the ransom, he is granted another, an individual trial, under the eye and control of Him who so loved him as to give His life for him, and who would not that any should perish, but that all should turn to God and live, we may be sure that only the wilfully disobedient will receive the penalty of the second trial. That penalty will be the second

death, from which there will be no ransom, no release, because there would be no object for another ransom or a further trial. All will have fully seen and tasted both good and evil; all will have witnessed and experienced the goodness and love of God; all will have had a full, fair, individual trial for life, under most favourable conditions. More could not be asked, and more will not be given. That trial will decide forever who would be righteous and holy under a thousand trials; and it will determine also who would be unjust, and unholy and filthy still, under a thousand trials.

The ransom given does not excuse sin in any; it does not propose to count sinners as saints, and usher them into everlasting bliss. It merely releases the accepting sinner from the first condemnation and its results, both direct and indirect, and places him again on trial for life, in which trial his own wilful obedience or wilful disobedience will decide whether he may or may not have life everlasting.

One difference between the experiences of the Church under trial now and the experiences of the world during its trial will be that the obedient of the world will begin at once to receive the blessings of restoration by a gradual removal of their weaknesses—mental and physical; whereas the Gospel Church, consecrated to the Lord's service even unto death, goes down into death and gets her perfection instantaneously in the first resurrection. Another difference between the two trials is in the more favourable surroundings of the next age as compared with this, in that then society, government, etc., will be favourable to righteousness, rewarding faith and obedience, and punishing sin; whereas now, under the prince of this world, the Church's trial is under circumstances unfavourable to righteousness, faith, etc. But this is to be compensated for in the prize of the glory and honour of the divine nature offered to the Church, in addition to the gift of everlasting life.

Adam's death was sure, though it was reached by nine hundred and thirty years of dying. Since he was himself dying, all his children were born in the same dying condition and without right to life; and, like their parents, they all die after a more or less lingering process. It should be remembered, however, that it is not the pain and suffering in dying, but death—the extinction of life—in which the dying culminates, that is the penalty of sin. The suffering is only incidental to it, and the penalty falls on many with but little or no suffering. It should further be remembered that when Adam forfeited life, he forfeited it forever; and not one of his posterity has ever been able to expiate his guilt or to regain the lost inheritance. All

the race are either dead or dying. And if they could not expiate their guilt before death, they certainly could not do it when dead—when not in existence. The penalty of sin was not simply to die, with the privilege and right thereafter of returning to life. In the penalty pronounced there was no intimation of release. (Gen. 2:17) The restitution, therefore, is an act of free grace or favour on God's part. And as soon as the penalty had been incurred, even while it was being pronounced, the free favour of God was intimated, which, when realized, will so fully declare His love.

Had it not been for the gleam of hope, afforded by the statement that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, the race would have been in utter despair; but this promise indicated that God had some plan for their benefit. When God swore to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, it implied a resurrection or restoration of all; for many were then dead and others have since died, unblessed. Nevertheless, the promise is still sure: all shall be blessed when the times of restoration or refreshing shall come. (Acts 3:19) Moreover, since blessing indicates favour, and since God's favour was withdrawn and His curse came instead because of sin, this promise of a future blessing implied the removal of the curse, and consequently a return of His favour. It also implied either that God would relent, change His decree and clear the guilty race, or else that He had some plan by which it could be *redeemed*, by having man's penalty paid by another.

God did not leave Abraham in doubt as to which was His plan, but showed, by various typical sacrifices which all who approached Him had to bring, that He could not and did not relent, nor excuse the sin; and that the only way to blot it out and abolish its penalty would be by a sufficiency of sacrifice to meet that penalty. This was shown to Abraham in a very significant type: Abraham's son, in whom the promised blessing centred, had first to be a sacrifice before he could bless, and Abraham received him from the dead in a figure. (Heb. 11:19) In that figure Isaac typified the true seed, Christ Jesus, who died to redeem men, in order that the redeemed might all receive the promised blessing. Had Abraham thought that the Lord would excuse and clear the guilty, he would have felt that God was changeable, and therefore could not have had full confidence in the promise made to him. He might have reasoned, if God has changed His mind once, why may He not change it again? If He relents concerning the curse of death, may He not again relent concerning the promised favour and blessing? But God leaves us in no such uncertainty. He gives us ample assurance of both His justice and His unchangeableness. He could not clear the guilty, even though He loved them so much that He

“spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up [to death] for us all.” (Rom. 8:32)

As the entire race was in Adam when he was condemned, and lost life through him, so when Adam’s life was redeemed by the man Christ Jesus, a possible race in his loins died also, and a full satisfaction, or corresponding price, was rendered to justice for all men; and He who *bought all* has full authority to restore all who come unto God by Him.

“As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Rom. 5:18,19) The proposition is a plain one: as many as have shared death on account of Adam’s sin will have life-privileges offered to them by our Lord Jesus, who paid their penalty to Justice, who became Adam’s substitute before the broken law, and thus “gave Himself a ransom for all.” 1 Tim. 2:6) He died, “the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 3:18) It should never be overlooked, however, that all of God’s provisions for our race recognize the human will as a factor in the securing of the divine favours so abundantly provided. Some have overlooked this feature in examining the text just quoted—Rom. 5:18,19. The Apostle’s statement, however, is that, as the sentence of condemnation extended to all the seed of Adam, even so, through the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Father’s plan, by the sacrifice of Himself on our behalf, a free gift is extended to all—a gift of forgiveness, which, if accepted, will constitute a justification or basis for life everlasting. And “as by one man’s disobedience many *were* made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be [not were] made righteous.” If the ransom alone, without our acceptance of it, made us righteous, then it would have read, by the obedience of one many *were* made righteous. But though the ransom has been given by the Redeemer and has been accepted by Jehovah, only a few during the Gospel age have been, though many during the Millennial age will be, made righteous—justified—“through faith in His blood.” Since Christ is the propitiation (satisfaction) for the sins of the whole world, all men may on this account be absolved and released from the penalty of Adam’s sin by Him—under the New Covenant.

There is no unrighteousness with God; hence “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) As He would have been unjust to have

allowed us to escape the pronounced penalty before satisfaction was rendered, so also He here gives us to understand that it would be unjust were He to forbid our restoration, since by His own arrangement our penalty has been paid for us. The same unswerving justice that once condemned man to death now stands pledged for the release of all who, confessing their sins, apply for life through Christ. “It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”—Rom. 8:33,34 (NKJV)

The completeness of the ransom is the very strongest possible argument for the restitution of all mankind who will accept it on the proffered terms. (Rev. 22:17) The very character of God for justice and honour stands pledged to it; every promise which He has made implies it; and every typical sacrifice pointed to the great and sufficient sacrifice—“the Lamb of God who takes away the SIN OF THE WORLD”—who is “the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins [the Church’s]; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (John 1:29 NKJV; 1 John 2:2) Since death is the penalty or wages of sin, when the sin is cancelled the wages must in due time cease. Any other view would be both unreasonable and unjust. The fact that no recovery from the Adamic loss is yet accomplished, though nearly two thousand years have elapsed since our Lord died, is no more an argument against restitution than is the fact that four thousand years elapsed before His death, a proof that God had not planned the redemption before the foundation of the world. Both the two thousand years since and the four thousand years before the death of Christ were appointed times for other parts of the work, preparatory to “the times of restitution of all things.” (Acts 3:21)

CHRIST WITHIN

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

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

A Christ ascended—all is done,
 A world redeemed, a victory won.

With angel hosts, a glorious throng,
 We’ll sing with joy salvation’s song.

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

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

Poems of Dawn

LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.” (1 John 4:18).

A better expression would have been the text saying, “There is no *dread* in love.” We do not dread that which we love. In one sense, however, the more we love, the more we fear. We would not be so careful about pleasing a person whom we do not thus love. This is not the kind of fear, however, that the Apostle wishes us to cast out. On the contrary, it should be much enhanced. Consequently, the word *dread* would more accurately express the thought. The Scriptures speak of some who have “*no fear of God before their eyes.*” (Rom. 3:18) Evidently these are unregenerate. Often, among men, there is a thoughtlessness in respect to God and the future. The Apostle in this text does not intimate that all hearts fear; but that if any heart fears, perfect love will cast it out. As knowledge and love increase fear diminishes. We may say that those who have a reverential fear are in a preferable attitude of mind; they are in better condition than the thoughtless. In life, certain conditions which surround us call for reverence; a man’s brain is so constituted that reverence will be a part of his mental attitude if he be not depraved. Hence, the Scriptures say that “*the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*” (Prov. 9:10) The fear of the Lord, the reverence of the Lord, will bring a blessing. This fear of the Lord increases as the child of God comes to know his Maker but it is a gradual process.

There is a certain fear which comes as the result of imperfect knowledge. We do not credit the adversary with producing all the evil thoughts of the human mind, yet he had very much to do with the evil influences which surround our race. People may be without fear of God, and even after they have come to the Lord, and are learning to reverence him and to know him, they may lack the right kind of fear. Then the Adversary’s plan will be to plant *dread* in their minds. “*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*” (2 Cor. 4:4) This evil influence is accountable for many of the things which seem so remarkable. It explains the fact that the heathen have devilish doctrines mingled with *dread* of God, and that the worldly who have knowledge of God, some Jews or Christians, fear also—*dread*. Yet Christians have much greater light upon God’s character than have others, and so should have correspondingly less fear than the heathen.

Our text is not intended to signify that a Christian should have no sense of

fear. This fact is shown by the experience of our Lord himself in the Garden of Gethsemane. He there feared, as the Apostle tells us in speaking of this occasion, and He was heard in that He feared. He offered up strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him out of death. (Heb. 5:7) If the Master feared, so should his followers. The Apostle says, *“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”* (Heb. 4:1) How shall we harmonise these fears with our text? The text is, evidently, not intended to contradict the great lesson otherwise taught. Our Lord Jesus appealed to the Father who, He knew, loved him: so with us, let us know that *“God is Love”* (1 John 4:8), but let us fear respecting ourselves, and have such a carefulness, such a desire to please God, that we feel fearful lest in any degree we come short. Ignorance begets fear but love for God enables us to cast out that fear, and also enables us to come to God with confidence. So let us *“draw nigh to God,”* (James 4:8) with full confidence that He will bless us. This thought is the very opposite to that of the heathen mind. Their conception of a god is that of a demon. The Christian, on the other hand who is walking in the footsteps of the Master learns to love his God and to wish to do the Father’s will only. Nothing is acceptable in the nature of a sacrifice that is not prompted by that love. *“The Father seeketh such to worship him...(as) worship in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:23,24)

CTW

A LITTLE TALK WITH JESUS

A LITTLE talk with Jesus,—
 How it smooths the rugged road!
 How it seems to help me onward,
 When I faint beneath my load!
 When my heart is crushed with sorrow,
 And mine eyes with tears are dim,
 There is naught can yield me comfort
 Like a little talk with Him.

I tell Him I am weary,
 And I fain would be at rest;
 But I still will wait His bidding,
 For His way is always best.
 Then His promise ever cheers me
 `Mid all the cares of life:—
 “I am come, and soon in glory
 Will end thy toil and strife.”

Ah, that is what I’m wanting,
 His lovely face to see—
 And I’m not afraid to say it,
 I know He’s wanting me.
 He gave His life a ransom
 To make me all His own,
 And He’ll ne’er forget His promise
 To me, His purchased one.

The way is sometimes weary
 To yonder nearing clime,
 But a little talk with Jesus
 Hath helped me many a time.
 The more I come to know Him,
 And all His grace explore,
 It sets me ever longing
 To know Him more and more.

Poems of Dawn

HIS CALLING

An Exhortation from the Epistle to the Ephesians

The apostle Paul prays earnestly (Eph. 1:16-20) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would bless the Church so bountifully in wisdom, in knowledge and in heart appreciation that they will be able to know the hope of HIS calling. And the word “hope” is used in the best Bible sense of certain prospect and eventual attainment. On no occasion should we suppose the word to mean the hope of the man of today, for he in his most ambitious and happiest moments uses the word in the sense of “perhaps” and “I hope so.” For the purpose of an interesting and profitable excursus (digression) in Scriptural truth let us read as though Paul is emphasising the word “his” in v.18. Is he not stressing the fact that the invitation emanates from the Father of glory alone; that while the whole plan of the ages is the ordering of the great Creator, this phase of his purpose is particularly HIS? Paul is impressing this upon us that we may the more value it; that our hope in it may increase; that we may gain confidence by it; that the eternal Father has deep interest in this portion of his workmanship; and that He does not dwell alone in inaccessible heavens waiting for his plans to reach their inevitable triumph, but is ever personally attentive to the needs of those who HE HIMSELF has called. According to verses 4/5, this calling was in his mind before the foundation of the world and that He had then predestined the honour to which the called should attain. Truly it is HIS calling. Planned long ago, but at long last at the appointed period the call goes forth, first by our Lord and then through his faithful disciples, particularly the apostle Paul. God had through the prophets of old declared his intention to recover and bless mankind, but his sacred secret was not revealed by them or known to them. It may be that this secret purpose can be deduced by study of incidents in the lives of the early servants of God; but it is true to believe that it was “hidden in God” prior to its appointed time of revelation. And, furthermore, unless the Church truth had been revealed by the operation of the Holy Spirit it would never have been found by diligent students of the Old Testament. Throughout the law and the prophets God is declared as the creator, the lawgiver, the judge and protector—in fact, all that we revere in the word God; but beginning with our Lord, the Holy Spirit reveals God as the heavenly Father. And it is because He is the Father of the Church, and they his sons as shown in the N.T. that we may know that in the highest sense it is HIS calling. Hence his personal interest in the welfare of his sons. And that is why Paul when planning such words as Romans 8 and the first four chapters of Ephesians speaks in such exultant tones. It was this new aspect of relationship to God in our Lord’s words

about his Father and our Father that caused Philip to exclaim “show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” (John 14:8) The answer to Philip and to us all who make the same request is the work of the Holy Spirit in the church dispensation, and the answer does suffice, does satisfy us that “the Father himself loveth you.” (John 16:27) Only by the knowledge that it is HIS calling can we fathom and accept the fatherhood and love of God.

But, whereas we assume that Paul emphasises the point that it is HIS calling, when writing to the Corinthian church he says it is YOUR calling. (1 Cor. 1:26) He changes the word in order to assure these brethren that they, even they, were called. It is probable that were the work of calling deputed to us, we should have passed Corinth by as unsuitable. None knew better than Paul the failings of this ecclesia; he knew that when they considered the breadth, and length, and depth, and the height of the love and also the call of God they would know themselves to be unworthy and might become despondent by introspection. In the context of 1 Cor. 1, Paul has forestalled any plea of unworthiness by describing the ones whom God has honoured with his calling, and the description fits the Corinthian brethren very well. Thus by saying it is the foolish, the weak, the base and the despised which He has called, he is contrasting HIS calling of Eph. 1 with YOUR calling of 1 Cor. 1. Both points of view are true, for it is HIS because it is his purpose and grace and it is YOURS because you are called according to his purpose. Is there not strength and assurance in the belief that we are called, even though we know in ourselves that we often fall short and cannot ever be worthy in ourselves? And, in 1 Cor. 1:30 Paul adds that by God’s provision, Christ “*is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (deliverance)*” and thus we may know that our deficiencies are supplied by his gifts. Let us believe with James that God hath chosen the poor of this world who are rich in faith, for by doing this we shall assure ourselves that it is OUR calling.

When writing to the Hebrews (ch. 3:1) he describes it as being a HEAVENLY calling. It is heavenly in origin and in prospect. We who once were Gentiles may believe and hold the church promises in this epistle, but should remember that primarily it was written to those who had long been the favoured people of God. As children of Jacob they had promises heavenly in origin but not in prospect. They had blessings of which, like the Church later, they were not worthy. And, they had already been called; called out of Egypt; chosen by the Lord God to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (Deut. 7:6-8) On Mount Sinai, Moses, as near to heaven as it was possible for

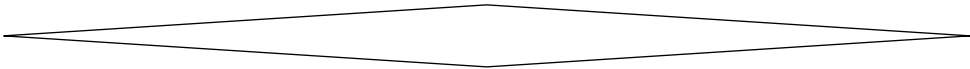
man to be, had received the two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and by the giving of the law with its provision of sacrifice and priesthood; and given a fair land in which to dwell, with promises of blessing, in basket and store, they were ranked above the surrounding nations. It was to this favoured people that the HEAVENLY call first is made, being at first thought, the people most likely to accept the new appeal. On the other hand knowing themselves to be the chosen people with ample proof of Divine blessing, they might question any new offer purporting to come from their own God of Israel. And so the writer to the Hebrews emphasises the heavenly prospect of the call as distinct from the best of earthly promises which they had enjoyed. He was offering something far better, something heavenly, based upon a better sacrifice. In the second chapter of Hebrews he expresses this new and heavenly call as bringing many sons to glory, and that the chief Son Who had been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death was now crowned with glory and honour, which in a later chapter he shows to be at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. And from the words of our Lord himself we know that He has gone to prepare a place for these sons of glory and that on his coming again He would receive them unto himself; that where He was there they would be also.

When Paul writes to the Philippian church he refers to it as a HIGH calling, and again the context tells why in that connection he so speaks. The heavenly calling is of course a high calling as to destination, yet he speaks of the HIGH calling as to rank. Think of the rank to which Paul had been born a Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law, a Pharisee. (Phil. 3:4-5) His standing was so high that he could have boasted that if any man thought he had whereof he could trust in the flesh, he had more. But those things which were gain he counted loss for Christ. His high rank as a Jew he renounced most gladly for the hope of his calling, “the HIGH calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14) Called in his youth and taught in the perfect manner of the law at the feet of Gamaliel; called while on the Damascus road to be an apostle; there was another call to which all his powers were centred and he was pressing toward the mark for the prize of the HIGH calling. Thus he was able to forget those things which were behind, honourable though they were and reach forth unto those things which were before, knowing that “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Col. 3:4)

Writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:9) he speaks of the HOLY calling—a reminder that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12:14) A

call to be like him who issued the invitation. *“As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”* (1 Pet. 1:15-16) Here Peter quotes from words addressed to the nation which had been called out of Egypt to be a holy nation unto himself. God’s method of forming them into a holy people was to separate them from the surrounding nations and bless them. He blessed them so abundantly that He appealed to them in later times through the prophet Isaiah (5:4), saying *“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?”* That they failed to be worthy of their status is too well-known to need noting now, providing that those who now are called with the HOLY calling profit by their failings. For again the call is issued to us to be a holy nation, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a purchased people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. The call of today will also be separate (though not isolated) from the world by the Father’s answer to our Lord’s prayer in John 17:15 *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”* The sons of God may confidently know that He Who kept Israel, never slumbering or sleeping, will also keep them; it being understood that the sons will walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called.

Jan/ Feb ‘82



Sleep well, sleep well, until His Kingdom comes.
 “The ransomed of the Lord shall then return,”
 And He shall bid thee waken out of sleep.
 A Highway shall be there, a Way of Life,
 And thou, dear heart, with joy shalt walk thereon,
 Up, up, until perfection’s goal is won,
 Where there shall be no pain, nor any death,
 When God’s dear hand shall wipe all tears away.
 In this blest hope I lay thee down to rest;
 Good night, dear heart, ’twill not be long, *sleep well!*

*‘Asleep in Jesus’
 Poems of the Way
 Gertrude W. Seibert*

LET THE WORD DWELL RICHLY

All verses NIV unless otherwise stated

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly (abundantly) as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” (Col. 3:16 NIV)

Purpose of the scripture

We know from 2 Tim 3:16,17 “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

In Romans there is an explanation “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.” (Rom 15:4)

In the Old Testament it says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Josh. 1:8 NKJV) The Word of God should be kept close and leads to wisdom.

Hearers and doers of the Word

James tells us to do what the Word says. In the Scriptures we see ourselves like in a mirror and see our true identity; he who will look into the perfect law, which is the law of freedom, will persist in it, like someone who fulfills it, he will be happy in his work. Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves. For anyone who hears the word but does not carry it out is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, and after observing himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom, and continues to do so—not being a forgetful hearer, but an effective doer—he will be blessed in what he does. If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not bridle his tongue, he deceives his heart and his religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:22-27)

To summarize, pure worship before God is:

- * To restrain our tongue
- * To look after the orphans
- * To look after the widows
- * To keep ourselves untainted by the world

Our Lord Jesus says: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31,32) To know the Truth. But what is Truth? Pilate asked the same question. In his prayer in Gethsemane Jesus says: “I have given them Your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world...Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.” (John 17:14,17) We see that the word of Jesus is the Word of the Father—that is Truth and it sanctifies (cleanses).

Pictures of dwellers in Christ

In John 12:44-46 Jesus stated, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the One who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the One who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should remain in darkness.” So, we should be the light and salt in this world as he was. A similar analogy is made in relation to water in John 7:38 when Jesus said, “whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said: rivers of living water will flow from within him.”

Matt. 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” We need to build with care. We can build with:

- * Gold, silver, costly stones
- * Wood, hay, straw

Paul talked about everyone’s work being revealed by fire. It could burn or stand. We could receive a reward, or not. God’s children are tried by fire all the time. (1 Cor. 3:12-13)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up,

thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (John 15:1-8) If we bear fruit, we are pruned to bear even more fruit. But why? For our Heavenly Father to be glorified.

In 1 Peter 1:22,23 it says, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." Why? As one is begotten again through the word of God.

"Your (God's) promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them. All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal. And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times." (Psa. 119:140,160; 12:6) "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him." Therefore "do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar." (Prov. 30:5,6) "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Heb. 4:12)

In the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-8) whoever hears the word can be like either:

- * the seed that fell along the path that the birds ate up
- * the seed that fell on rocky places that was scorched
- * the seed that fell among thorns that was choked
- * the seed that fell on good soil that produces a crop a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold

In the first category the listener is likened to someone who "hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one (Satan) comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart." (Matt. 13:19) In the second case the seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone "who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away." (vv.20,21) In the third situation "the seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful." (v.22) And finally "the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (v.23)

Jesus then continues with another parable from verse 24, the Parable of the Weeds saying “the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.” The good seed are the people of the Kingdom and the weeds are the people of the evil one, Satan. They grow together and are not separated till the harvest.

John 6:26-69 says let us work for the food that endures, to eternal life, which the Son of man gives. The work that God asks of us to believe in our Lord Jesus. The Father gives us the true bread from heaven, which descends from heaven giving life to the world and no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws them. Whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” and whoever eats this bread will live forever. Who does not eat my flesh and does not drink my blood has no life in them. As John 6:68 says, “You have the words of eternal life.”

Richness and abundance

Every day we must feed on the teachings of Jesus, abundantly, and putting it in practice in our daily lives by living the “words of life.” Let us consider all that is good, through the wisdom that comes from above.

“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created... Take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.” (James 1:18-21) James also tells us to ask God for wisdom and it will be given to us. However wisdom can be worldly or from above; from our heavenly Father as it says in chapter 3:17-18 for *“the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.”*

To praise the Father, to give Him glory we need to produce a lot of fruit such as “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Gal 5:22,23) And also in Eph. 5:9 “for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.” Therefore as we are the light of God, let us live as children of light.

We should “*find out what pleases the Lord*. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Eph. 5:10-20)

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.” (Phil 2:1,2)

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends...to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Phil 4:1-8)

For “now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it. Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name. ‘On the day when I act,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who

serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.” (Mal 3:15-18)

Therefore as King David said “I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.” (Psa. 34:1)

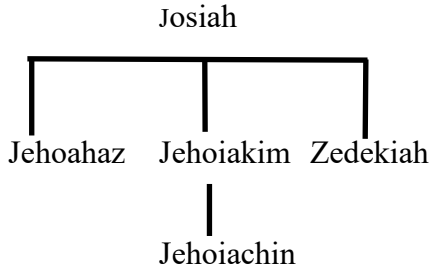
GC

Elevated high was he,
Next unto the king to be.
Great his capability,
Equal his humility.

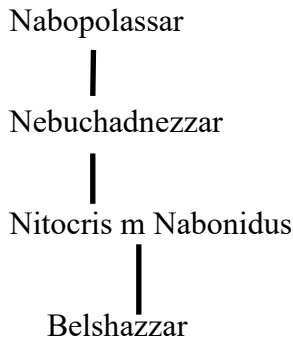
Captive, but with mind still free,
True to God as one could be;
True to king, all did agree,
Though he prayed where all could see.

*Daniel, Poems of the Way
Martin C. Mitchell*

Family Tree for the House of Judah



Kings of Babylon Family Tree



DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

Part 1. Exile from Zion

He walks on to the stage a youth, life just opening out before him, an exile from his native country, doomed to attain manhood's estate in an alien land, far from the Temple of God and all that Temple represented. When the curtain drops, we see him still on the stage, an old man and full of days, too aged and infirm to join the procession of rejoicing men and women wending their way back to the land of their fathers, there to rebuild their Temple and worship God in his appointed way. During the long years of a life spent alternately in prominence and seclusion, in honour and neglect, he maintained inflexible faith and a constant passion for the restoration of his people to their own land; when at last the fruition of his hopes appeared he was too old to share in the home-going! Nevertheless he died content, knowing that God would remember him and, in the resurrection life, grant him his heart's desire. For the intervening time he left on record, as his legacy to all who in after times would come to know God, a narrative so thrilling in adventure and so stimulating in sterling faith that it has been the inspiration of thousands who in their own day and generation have endured the fires of persecution and withstood opposition to righteousness.

The Book of Daniel is full of interest to the student of prophecy and the believer who seeks strength and encouragement for faith. Its vivid stories, of heroic deeds dared by stalwart believers in God, and of the mighty arm of God stretched out on their behalf, never grow old and will never die. The revelation of things to come, given to Daniel by means of visions and dreams, have proven themselves to be "Visions of God." They have occupied the attention of students through the twenty-four centuries which have elapsed since his day. Less than two hundred years after his death, if the historians are to be believed, Jaddua the High Priest of Israel showed the prophecies of Daniel to the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great, explaining to him how his own career of conquest was foreshadowed in those prophecies. Now in the last century Christian students scan the ancient words to gain some clue to the significance of present-day events, and take assurance from them that the days of the Kingdom cannot be much longer delayed. But what is of greater importance is the insight this remarkable book gives into the personal lives of men, the stimulus to faith and constancy which is afforded by the stories of loyalty, fortitude and Divine deliverance which have made the book to stand out in the Old Testament as a record of marvellous achievements against a background

conspicuous for its gallery of remarkable men. The lad Daniel, making his way, by sheer force of character and unswerving loyalty, to the highest office in an idolatrous and materialistic land; the proud king Nebuchadnezzar, arrogant in his might, at length abased and humbled before God; his effeminate grandson Belshazzar, ignominiously slain in the midst of unheeding revelry; the three servants of God, prepared to suffer a cruel death rather than deny him; Nitocris, the royal daughter of Nebuchadnezzar who grew up with Daniel, never espoused his faith yet turned to him for enlightenment when the mysterious hand wrote the doom of Babylon upon the banqueting room walls; the jealous courtiers who plotted the death of Daniel but themselves fell into the pit of their own contriving; these characters stand out vividly against a background which tells us more about the life and customs of ancient Babylon than any other single book now in existence.

Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, were boys together at the time, about six hundred years before Christ, when the Kingdom of Judah was declining to its fall. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, inhabiting the northern part of the land, had already gone into captivity, over a century earlier. Now it was the turn of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. Jehoahaz, king of Judah, had been deposed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, and Jehoiakim placed upon the throne. He had reigned only a little over two years when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, not yet sole king, for his father Nabopolassar was still alive, invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was forced to renounce allegiance to Egypt and become the vassal of Babylon. As surety for his good behaviour, the Babylonians took some of the aristocracy and nobility of Judah back to Babylon as hostages, and these four lads, either of royal blood or related in some way to the royal line of the kings of Judah, were taken among them.

It was common practice of the Babylonians thus to take into the royal court of their own land selected members of the younger relatives of vassal kings. The idea was to train them in the ways and ideas of the conquerors so that eventually they might become trustworthy rulers over the conquered peoples from whom they had been drawn. Daniel and his companions found themselves thrown into the society of other lads of their own age in the king's court at Babylon, taken from other countries which the Babylonians had overrun and conquered. Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, was a son of the High Priest of the Moon god at Haran, where Terah the father of Abraham died, and he had been taken captive in the same way as Daniel and ultimately rose to become the husband of

Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, Nitocris, and, by virtue of that marriage, the last but one king of Babylon. Belshazzar, their son, was the last king.

Daniel could hardly have been less than eighteen years of age when he was taken to Babylon. Nabopolassar died in the next year and Nebuchadnezzar became sole king. Two years later Daniel stood before him and interpreted his dream of the great image. (Dan. 2) The term "children" (Dan. 1:4) in the original Hebrew has the meaning of youths or young men, a different word being employed when the meaning is limited to a child; the word used allows for any age up to twenty-four or so.

Jeremiah was living at Jerusalem at that time and had been for twenty years past. He was well known in Court circles and the lad Daniel must have been well acquainted with him. Ezekiel, too, was a lad of seventeen at this same time but since his home was, in all probability, by the Dead Sea he and Daniel may not have met. It was not until eight years later that Ezekiel in his turn was taken captive to Babylon. Two other prophets who also lived and prophesied at this same time were Obadiah and Habakkuk, but there is no evidence to indicate whether or not they and Daniel ever came into contact. It would seem, however, that Daniel kept in touch with the older prophet, Jeremiah, and had obtained copies of his writings as the years passed by, for when in Dan. 9:2 we are told that Daniel understood by the books of Jeremiah that seventy years were to mark the limit of the Exile he refers to a prophecy that Jeremiah uttered in the first year of Zedekiah (Jer. 29:10) by which time Daniel had been in Babylon eight years.

So it came about that one day a little procession could have been seen making its way out of the Damascus Gate on the northern side of Jerusalem. First, a detachment of Babylonian soldiers, stepping smartly along the highway, their coats of mail gleaming in the sunlight. Behind them, a line of chariots, each containing five or six passengers, chiefly bearded Babylonians, but in some of them Jewish youths. After these came heavy wagons, lumbering along with their loads of treasure, of gold and silver vessels, taken from the Palace and the Temple. Finally, another detachment of soldiers. Daniel and his friends were leaving their native home for perpetual exile in a strange and idolatrous land. Never again were their eyes to look upon that Temple which Solomon had built more than three centuries earlier. They could not have known, at that moment, that only another nineteen years were to elapse before that glorious edifice was to sink down in the destroying flames and lie, a desolate mass of rubble, while Israel expiated her national sin in a foreign land.

So the land of Judah was left behind, and for something like thirty days the little party travelled, through Samaria and Syria, along the great high road that led to the Euphrates, and then, turning southward, and following the course of the river as it flowed across the flat Babylonian plain, come at last in sight of the great city Babylon.

Daniel could not have failed to reflect that he was retracing the steps of his forefather Abraham, in the reverse direction. This was the road by which Abraham had come from Ur of the Chaldees, following the river Euphrates past Babylon and up to Haran, and, when his father Terah was dead, down through Syria into Canaan. Abraham, obeying God's call, had left the luxury and glitter of that pagan land for the simplicity and purity of a pastoral life in the place to which God had led him. Here had he lived and died, his son Isaac lived and died, and the twelve tribes of Israel grown into a nation. Now this young lad was called upon to leave the hills and valleys, the tree-clad mountains and rushing streams, the vineyards and olive groves, the orange groves and pomegranates, of this hallowed country where God had put his name and planted his chosen people, for a land of great and luxurious cities, gigantic temples and magnificent palaces, wide rivers and straight-cut canals, busy with the trade and commerce of many nations. Instead of the chaste and dignified worship of God Most High he was to witness every form of idolatry, the reverence of the people given freely to images of gold and silver and wood and stone—objects that could neither see, nor hear, nor speak. Like his friend and teacher, Jeremiah (10:4-5) he might say of their idols, "*They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.*" Abraham was called to come away from this place and be separate from the unclean things: Daniel was called to go back among them. Surely the ways of God are mysterious and past finding out! Daniel must have wondered what purpose God could have in sending him to such a place, what usefulness a life spent in these surroundings could have for him. And as the towering walls of the world's greatest city loomed up before him the lad's young heart must have been lifted to God in supplication that, in the unknown life which he must now face, his faith and loyalty might never give way.

AOH (To be continued)

Time opened wide its vista to his gaze,
 In vision he beheld these latter days;
 Saw mighty kings and empires rise and fall,
 And God's great kingdom superseding all.

Poems of the Way

A SIGN AND A WITNESS

A Study on Isaiah 19

Part 1. The casting down of Egypt

The nineteenth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy was spoken in the ears of Israel at a time when Egypt, the great earthly power in which they had trusted for so long, was declining to its fall. It is one of the paradoxes of history that the nation that had held their forefathers in bondage and from which they had been delivered by a signal exercise of Divine power should be the very nation to which they would turn for protection only four centuries later. For something like four more centuries Israel flirted with Egypt, making agreements and alliances and generally looking to Egypt for the help they should have expected from God, and then Egypt and Israel fell together and the people of the Lord found they had been trusting, as Rab-Shakeh the general of Sennacherib's host on one occasion taunted them with trusting, on a broken reed which would pierce the hand of the man who was foolhardy enough to lean upon it.

Isaiah never wearied of warning his fellow-citizens of the weakness of Egypt and the folly of trusting in the Egyptians. His warnings were very generally unheeded and so disaster came upon the nation. The same warning comes to us; we have the same God and He still abides by the same principles. He will still deliver the nation that puts its trust in him, and disaster will still overtake the nation that puts its trust in the arm of the flesh. Egypt in prophecy usually pictures the secular world in contrast to the Christian community which has separated itself from the world and no longer holds to its standards. So often, though, members or sections of that community do leave somewhat of their high ideals and lose something of their high faith, and begin to trust to an extent in the standards and policies and weapons of this world. When they do so, the burning words of Isaiah are to the point and applicable to them. *“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD... When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.”* (Isa. 31:1,3) It is impossible not to notice the military “flavour” of these verses. If there is one particular aspect of this modern world that is represented more than others by Egypt, it is the military aspect, the policies and principles and activities that have to do with war between nations. Israel looked to Egypt for protection because Egypt was a powerful military nation, and Israel had forgotten that her own mission was to demonstrate the power and efficacy of the rulership of God, a

rule which has no place for armed conflict between men. That is one of the greatest failures of organised Christianity today; in the face of the apparently overwhelming nature of those militarised forces which threaten our own orderly way of life they know of no effective defence than resource to the same weapons. It is not surprising therefore if, despite the rightness of the cause, they ultimately find that trust in carnal weapons and the policies of the unregenerate man leads to the same type of disasters in our day, that this same trust brought to Israel in their day.

Isaiah's nineteenth chapter had a message for his own generation and it has a message for us. In both cases the message is prophetic: it spoke, and speaks, of things to come. Like so many of Isaiah's visions, the Holy Spirit showed him, first, a picture of his own day and the consequences that would arise out of the political situation then existing, and then, by a swift transition of scene, took him forward into the world's day of judgment and showed him how the same wrong principles, followed this time by all the world, would bring about even greater trouble, but that behind it all was God, waiting to bless all his creatures when the due time for blessing had come. In this particular chapter the first fifteen verses picture the decline and fall of Egypt, from Isaiah's own day to her utter subjugation by Rome six or seven centuries later, and the last twenty verses picture the Divine restoration of Egypt in the days of the Kingdom—an Egypt that is no longer a symbol of militarism or of the policies of this world, but has become a co-partner with Israel the restored people of God, and is herself also blessed with the honoured title, given her by the Most High himself, of "Egypt my people." It is obvious from what we know of history and of the Divine Plan that this sequel must take us into the Millennial Age for its accomplishment, and it is in the golden days of that blessed Age therefore that the chapter closes.

"The burden of Egypt." (v.1) This word "burden" is one that, from a root meaning something carried or lifted up, had come to signify a message delivered, an oracle or a prophecy. We sometimes use much the same term when we speak of the "burden" of an individual's message. In many cases, but not in all, the message is a condemnatory or warning one; but the idea of the word is really that of the charge laid upon the prophet himself to deliver the message and in this case the theme is a message concerning Egypt which Isaiah is under strong obligation to deliver.

"The LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt." (v.1) This is quite a remarkable passage. The next fourteen verses

describe the literal ravaging of Egypt by her literal enemies, the Assyrians, but here the Lord himself is pictured as leading the attack and, in his entrance to the land, destroying the idolatry thereof. Now that is just what we must accept, that the Lord God is overseeing and overruling the affairs of the nations in order to bring into full effect the provisions of his great Plan. In another place the Assyrians are called the “rod of God’s anger” (Isa. 10:5) and even in the narratives of their impact upon the children of Israel it is plain to see that, all unknowingly, they were being used as his instruments in the diverting of human affairs to work out his own ultimate purposes. So here, now that the time had come to show Israel, and us through Israel, the futility of the arm of the flesh, and the sin of ignoring Divine principles, the Lord allowed the Assyrian hosts to achieve successes they had never achieved before. In the spirit of prophecy, and the symbolism of the vision, that fact was shown in symbol by the Lord, the God of Israel, riding upon the heavens in his war-chariot of thunder clouds, advancing upon the proud empire of the Pharaohs with the multitudes of the Assyrian host behind him; and at that sight the gigantic, impassive statues of all the gods of Egypt took fright and fell down prostrate in their places, and the glory that was Egypt passed away forever.

Just so will it be when the last great conflict of this Day of Trouble comes upon the world. The battle is called the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty. It is a conflict between contending factions among mankind but it is the overruling power of God that has caused the elements of that conflict so to converge together that the battle takes place when it does. The contestants do not know that; their motives are greed and hate and lust for power, just as were those of the Assyrians advancing to the destruction of Egypt in Isaiah’s day; but all unknowingly they will be fulfilling the purposes of God, and when the conflict is ended it will be the voice of God that calls for peace and commands the allegiance of the shattered remnants of both sides.

Now in verses 2 to 13 Isaiah declares that the Egyptians will fight the Egyptians; there is to be civil war amongst them, and the wisdom and discretion of their governors will vanish. They will seek idols and wizards and the supernatural forces of evil in their extremity, as did Saul in his, when he visited the witch at En-dor. The people would be given into the hand of a cruel and fierce ruler and the land would languish. The Nile, upon which the prosperity of Egypt depends, would fail to send down sufficient water and there would be consequent famine; the industries of fishing and clothmaking from the native cotton and other textile plants

would dwindle and disappear. The princes of Egypt would become as fools and the whole nation as incapable of guiding its own destinies as is a drunken man of walking a straight course. The picture is that of a people, highly organised in science and art and industry, as was Egypt, whose whole economic structure has broken down and which is very near to complete disintegration. It is the picture of a nation having a glorious past, but no future. The melancholy catalogue ends (v.15) with “*Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, (king and prince, artisan and labourer, the “head” and the “tail” of society) may do.*” For Egypt it is the end.

Ezekiel saw the same thing at a time when the sentence was in the process of execution, and he said of Egypt “*It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel...but they shall know that I am the Lord (their) GOD.*” (Ezek. 29:15-16) That word stands as condemnation not only of Israel’s confidence in Egypt three millenniums ago, but of the spiritual short-sightedness of every Christian in this day who trusts in worldly policies and national armaments to defend God’s cause. And it stands as condemnation of every Christian body that trusts in the arm of flesh rather than in the Lord their God.

Historically, events came to pass just as Isaiah had foreseen. At just about the time he uttered the prophecy—certainly not many years later—the military power of Assyria, which had been steadily increasing for several centuries, for the first time came into collision with the military might of Egypt. At this period Egypt was governed by a powerful Ethiopic dynasty (the 25th dynasty of Pharaohs) and the warlike Ethiopians, always superior in military skill and energy to the more peaceable native Egyptians, formed the mainstay of the Egyptian forces. These Ethiopians were not like the natives of Ethiopia today; they were a highly civilised and physically powerful race, and for a long time dominated Egypt in the north and exercised a profound influence upon the history of nations. They were descendants of the sons of Cush who had migrated in ancient times from the Persian Gulf along the coast of Arabia and crossed the Red Sea into Africa. The Ethiopian viceroy in Egypt was Sabaca (called “So” in 2 Kings 17:4, where he is shown as conspiring with Hoshea King of Israel against Assyria). The failure of that conspiracy and the consequent fall of Samaria and captivity of the “Ten Tribes” laid the way open for the Assyrian advance upon Egypt, and within a few more years Sargon of Assyria was besieging the southern Palestine city of Ashdod preparatory

to invading Egypt itself. (Isaiah 20:1 refers to this event; *“In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it.”*) This was the first outward evidence to Israel of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the 19th chapter. Six years later Sargon died and Sennacherib succeeded him; almost at once he was in the field and reduced Egypt to subjection, but suffered his memorable defeat outside Jerusalem when his army was destroyed in a single night by the “angel of the LORD.” (Isa. 37:36) After that for twenty-six years there was a cessation of Assyrian aggression both on Egypt and Judea, which is remarkable when it is realised that this coincides with the latter years of the reign of Hezekiah, and God had promised him, after his miraculous recovery, that there would be peace in his days. (Isa. 39:8) Sennacherib never tried conclusions with the Lord God of Israel again, but after his death, his son and successor Esar-haddon (Isa. 37:38) invaded Judah, took Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, then only twenty-three years old and already an idolator, prisoner to Babylon and went on into Egypt. This time the country was devastated. Esar-haddon well fills the role of the “cruel...king” prophesied in Isa. 19:4. The ancient city of Memphis, the capital (“Noph” in Isa. 19:13) was completely destroyed and all its treasures, dating back for more than two thousand years, taken to Nineveh. Thebes, the second holy city (the “populous No” of Nahum 3:8) suffered a like fate, and for the second time—the first being the short-lived rule of the “Shepherd Kings”—since the sons of Ham entered the country a few generations after the Flood, Egypt became subject to an Asiatic power.

There were times of rebellion and of temporary national independence. Native Pharaohs exercised control and held the foreigners at bay for a generation or two, but the doom of Egypt had been pronounced and slowly she sank under the pressure of Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and finally Roman invasions until all pretence of national sovereignty was completely lost. To this day Egypt, the greatest military empire of the ancient world, remains a “base kingdom,” (Ezek. 29:15) a pawn and a catspaw for the great powers of the earth.

It is just at that point that the vision changes. *“In that day”* cries Isaiah suddenly *“shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.”* (Isa. 19:16-17) In one swift flash the Spirit-illuminated mind of the prophet was

carried forward from his own day to “that day”—the Millennial Day is always in his mind when he says “in that day”—to a great Egypt which, like its prototype of old, has come to the brink of destruction because of its reliance on the gods of war. But this time there is a difference. This greater Egypt, this military organised warlike world of the Last Day, broken down and at its wits end in consequence of the havoc wrought by its own internecine conflicts and the terrible effectiveness of its engines of war, is in terror of the land of Judah! That is a situation which can only have its application to the greater world, Egypt at the Time of the End, for it has never been true in history previously. From the time that Israel established itself in the land, through all the chequered history of the Judges and the Kings, the Captivity, the days of the Maccabees and then of the Dispersion, there has never been a time when Egypt went in terror of Judah. In terror, successively, of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Islam, yes, but never of despised Judah. It is only now, when Israel is again established as a nation, and a vigorous, and self-asserted nation, that even the modern literal Egypt shows any signs of apprehension. The fulfilment must be a future and not a past event and therefore takes its place as an element in the order of events that characterises the dawning of the Millennium. And the association of the name of the Lord of Hosts with the cause of the “terror” certifies that it is not going to be in consequence of any temporary political or military success the present State of Israel is destined to achieve, for that State is founded, like all the Gentile powers, on that very principle of military force that stands condemned in the sight of God, the very principle that in this our day is entering into judgment. It is going to be in consequence of the fact that Judah is backed by the power of God.

The conclusion, therefore, is that this “terror” with which “Egypt” views Judah refers to the same thing that is described in Zech. 12:6. *“In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place.”* The “terror” is due to the fact that a righteous nation, led by the “Ancient Worthies,” will be taking up its destined work and impressing the peoples around with a consciousness of the fact that God is working mightily in earth’s affairs and that the days of injustice are numbered.

The Authorised Version inserts a paragraph mark at this point, indicating that a new section of the narrative now begins. That is rightly done, for at this point the reconstruction of this world—Egypt, that has seen the sign

of the Kingdom in the fact of restored Judah, commences. From now on, the healing and reconciliation of Egypt commences, and this is Millennial work indeed. The language of Egypt becomes the language of holiness; the cities of Egypt are sacred to the Lord; the altar of offering is set up in the midst of the land and the stone of witness at its border. The Saviour appears, and the Egyptians hail him and worship him; there is no more any war or enmity between the nations but all are one in the brotherhood of mankind and all are blessed of God. These are the things that Isaiah saw and recorded in verses 18-25 of this thrilling chapter, things that we shall go on to examine in the detail that they deserve.

(To be concluded)

AOH

A FLOWER FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY

(Lam. 3:22,23)

How many buds are in my garden sleeping,
Under the snow-wreathed flower beds, cold and bare?
Ah! Well I know my Father's hand is keeping
A whole bright realm of blossoms for me there!

And when I hear the bells at midnight ringing
To welcome in another New Year's Day,
I know 'tis not far off, the time of singing,
When flowers shall spring and gardens be gay.

And if assured the opening year is holding
Joys yet unborn within the silent wood,
I am more sure 'twill bring a fresh unfolding
Of many precious promises of God.

Lo! Even now, though summer days prevail not,
A promise-bud awakes for you and me:
Hath He not said it? *My compassions fail not:*
New every morning shall they bloom for thee!

Sweet little flower of His own hand's adorning,
Who promised to be with us all the days!
You hath He sent to bless our New Year's morning
And fill our whole hereafter with His praise!

Jane M. Campbell

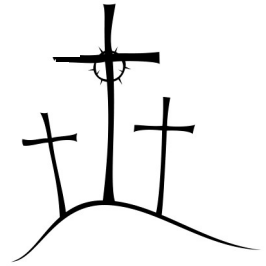


I WILL SING OF MY REDEEMER—A HYMN

I WILL sing of my Redeemer
 And His wondrous love to me.
 On the cruel cross He suffered,
 From the curse to set me free.

Chorus-

*Sing, O! sing of my Redeemer;
 With His blood he purchased me;
 On the cross He sealed my pardon,
 Paid the debt and made me free.*



I will tell the wondrous story,
 How, my lost estate to save,
 In his boundless love and mercy,
 He the ransom freely gave.

I will praise my dear Redeemer,
 His triumphant power to save,
 How the victory He giveth
 Over sin and death and grave.

I will sing of my Redeemer,
 And my call to glory too;
 He from death to life hath brought me,
 Heav'nly glory brought to view.

These are the words of P. P. Bliss (1838-1876) a prolific American hymn writer who was associated with Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey. This hymn was discovered in his luggage after he died suddenly following an accident on a train en route to Chicago. Both he and his wife perished but this previously unknown hymn remains. His other well-known hymns are "More holiness give me," "Free from the curse O happy condition," "The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin," "Man of sorrows" and "Sing them over again to me."

The following is a list of scriptures likely to have inspired the writer:

Psalm 89:1 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

Gal. 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Psalms 146:2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

Psalms 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Acts 20:28 (NKJV) Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

Revelation 5:9 They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

1 John 1:7 If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Mark 10:45 The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

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.

1 Corinthians 15:57 Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Ephesians 2:4-6 God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

THE BIBLE'S SONG OF LOVE

Verse by verse through the Song of Songs Part 3c Chapters 4:12-5:1

All references RV unless otherwise stated

4:12 Of her the Bridegroom says “A GARDEN BARRED IS MY SISTER, MY BRIDE; A SPRING SHUT UP, A FOUNTAIN SEALED.” (mar.)

A garden is a cultivated place, not originally or naturally a garden. It is chosen from uncultivated ground, walled round, planted, watered and transformed by the gardener into a place of beauty and rest. She is described as the garden itself or, as the Apostle Paul puts it, “ye are God’s tilled land.” (1 Cor. 3:9 mar.) She is a garden which God hath barred for “know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for Himself.” (Psa. 4:3)

God spoke similarly of Natural Israel’s restoration to His favour. “Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.” (Isa. 58:11) The Bride is a spring shut up, a fountain sealed—the very picture of holiness. Water being scarce in the East, the owner of a spring sealed it with a stone bearing his signet. Jesus assures those who follow in His steps that “the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.” (John 4:13,14) “Now He that...anointed us, is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the spirit in our hearts.” (2 Cor. 1:21,22)

“When a man died in a tent (Num. 19:14,15) every ‘open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it shall be unclean.’ How true it is that we are in a place where moral death and corruption sheds its influence on everything. To be clean we must be covered vessels...we need to be ‘enclosed,’ ‘shut up,’ ‘sealed’... With those who have the affections of the spouse it is not merely a question of what is right or wrong—though surely there would be no carelessness as to that—but of what is pleasurable to Christ. We want His garden to be such as to yield Him the fullest possible satisfaction and delight, so that we may...invite Him to come in with assurance that He will find pleasure in doing so... ‘A spring shut up’...something which is for the Lord alone—a flow of affections and appreciations which He alone can estimate.” (* C.A.C.)

How precious is the thought that His espoused Bride is the source of His refreshment and joy. A garden enclosed for *His* use and pleasure; a spring to refresh the Beloved one. “What manner of persons ought ye to be.”

4:13 The Bridegroom now compares His church to an orchard. “**THY SHOOTS ARE AN ORCHARD OF POMEGRANATES, WITH PRECIOUS FRUITS;**” “Herein” Jesus said, “is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:8) “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” (Phil. 1:11)

“**HENNA, WITH SPIKENARD PLANTS**”

4:14 “**SPIKENARD AND SAFFRON, CALAMUS AND CINNAMON, WITH ALL TREES OF FRANKINCENSE; MYRRH AND ALOES, WITH ALL THE CHIEF SPICES.**” See what the Lord finds and expects to find, in His Church. What diversity of plants, and what choice fruits. The fruits of the spirit are manifold, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.” (Gal. 5:22-23 mar.) Reference to the full range of spices suggests that Christ looks for fragrance in every aspect of our characters. The special significance of the mention of these spices by name is that most of them were ingredients in the holy anointing oil and the sacred incense.

This verse is a fitting culmination to the last three verses which beautifully describe God’s provision of a garden tended and cultivated by Him for the joy of His Son. This garden has been planted by God himself—to be enclosed—never plucked up or laid bare for “every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up.” (Matt. 15:13)

4:15 Having heard her Beloved describe her beauties she ascribes all the praise to Him “**THOU ART A FOUNTAIN OF GARDENS,**” she says “**A WELL OF LIVING WATERS, AND FLOWING STREAMS FROM LEBANON.**”

A garden that lacks moisture is soon dried up and languishing. Its fruitfulness is vitally concerned with its being well-watered. Incidentally most of the prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel speak directly of streams and rain or of reforestation to preserve the natural moisture.

The formation of this garden “is a well of living waters and...streams from Lebanon” at once springing up out of the believing soul, and floating down from above, as it were from the heights of Lebanon. This is very much like the Apostle’s thought expressed in the words “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights...” (James 1:17 KJV) The fountain deepens into a well; the well

widens into streams.” Thus does she see in Him the source of all life and fruitfulness, deepening and widening and flowing out to “all nations of the earth.” The well-watered garden produces fragrance and the Bride desires that this fragrance shall flow out—just as His life-giving streams flow out freely to all who are called of God.

4:16 In a gesture of triumphant submission the Bride then goes on to say with the Apostle “I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned...both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.” (Phil. 4:12) But she expresses her thoughts in the words “AWAKE, O NORTH WIND;” (of adversity) “AND COME, THOU SOUTH (wind);” (of favour) “BLOW UPON MY GARDEN, THAT THE SPICES THEREOF MAY FLOW OUT.”

The evidence of fragrant characters is brought out by the north winds of adversity as well as by the south winds of encouragement and favour. Thus the Lord, in omniscient love, adapts these different experiences to the requirements of the various plants. At the right moment He bids the north wind to “awake” and the south wind to “come.” He knows exactly what each member can bear, the requisite pruning for each branch, the look which will soften a Peter’s heart, the reproof that will convince the unbelieving Thomas, the sympathy which will bind up the bleeding hearts of the bereaved sisters of Bethany etc...

Such is her love for Him that she welcomes and invites just those experiences which will bring forth the fragrance in which He delights. (Rom. 8:28; 5:3-5) “LET MY BELOVED COME INTO HIS GARDEN, AND EAT HIS PRECIOUS FRUITS.” Can we not see the change? The Bride called it MY garden first in verse 16. Now it is HIS garden. MINE when it was immature, HIS when the breezes have aroused it to life.

It is untrue humility to deny the great things which God hath wrought in us. Thus we read that St. Paul “rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry” (Acts 21:19) for, he said, “by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain...” (1 Cor. 15:10) “The fruits of righteousness...are through Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1:11) The good things are wrought by God: and every good thing which is in us is so “in Christ Jesus.” (Philemon 6 KJV) No works of ours could be pleasant to the Lord, for the best are tainted with sin, and He can ‘eat’ nothing that is unclean.

5:1 To prove how acceptable is the prayer of His bride, He answers it immediately. “I AM COME INTO MY GARDEN, MY SISTER, MY BRIDE: I HAVE GATHERED MY MYRRH WITH MY SPICE; I HAVE EATEN MY HONEYCOMB WITH MY HONEY; I HAVE DRUNK MY WINE WITH MY MILK.”

The association of sweet (honey) and bitter (myrrh) tells us that He gathers the fruits of bitter experience with those of soothing sweetness. Milk in scripture usually refers symbolically to the rudiments of God’s teaching—wine with doctrine. The association in this verse, however, suggests that the same emphasis is being given to milk as in 1 Pet. 2:2 (KJV) where the Apostle contrasts “sincere” (Greek *adolos*—guileless) with “guile” (v.1) (Greek *dolos*), his emphasis being on the fact that the milk of the word is pure compared with worldly impurity. In the Song Christ appears to say “I have not only been able to feed on the graces of the spirit cultivated in my bride’s garden but I can also share with her the pure doctrine (wine) and the pure milk of the word which in her care is unpolluted.”

There is something very striking in the oneness of sentiment and even language pervading this book, sweetly telling that “*we have* the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. 2:16) Thus the Bride had called Him her “Beloved” (Chap. 4:16) now He calls her “my sister, my spouse.” (KJV) She called it “His garden” and He owns it as such—“I am come into *my* garden.” She invited Him to “eat His pleasant fruits” (KJV) and He says “I have eaten” etc. He also, most emphatically calls them all his own: “I have gathered *my* myrrh with *my* spice; I have eaten *my* honeycomb with *my* honey; I have drunk *my* wine with *my* milk.” We have nothing of our own: all we have and are is the Lord’s. (1 Cor. 6:19,20) “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor 4:7) But this is not all, for the fruits of the Christian life are to be shared by all who are in Christ. “EAT O FRIENDS; DRINK, YEA, DRINK ABUNDANTLY, OF LOVE.” (mar.)

The Apostle warned that we should “be *filled* with the spirit”, and not with wine. (Eph. 5:18) There is no danger of excess in this spiritual feast; “eat...yea drink abundantly.” There is also comfort in the expression “friends.” I have not called you servants but friends. (John 15:15) “If there is a ministry from His saints to Him there will always be a ministry from Him to His saints...Whatever he received we may be sure that He will always be pre-eminent in love, and will give more than he receives...May the spiritual features, which are set forth in the exclusiveness and fruitfulness and fragrance of His garden, be so definitely formed in us that

there may be a spot amid this desert waste to which He can come with deep pleasure, and find what His heart looks for in those whom He loves.” (CAC)

EEA/LB

NOTICES

BIBLE STUDENTS SEMINAR DAY

March 2022 in the Midlands

Venue and date to be confirmed

For the benefit of those who wish to keep the memorial of our Lord’s death at the time nearest the anniversary, it is suggested that **Thursday 14 April 2022 (14 Nisan) after 6 p.m.** is the appropriate date and time.

BIBLE STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

HIGH LEIGH CONFERENCE CENTRE, HODDESDON

27-31 JULY 2022 DV

Theme: That great shepherd of the sheep

Gone from us

Priscilla Fatcher

Copies of Volumes 5 & 6 of the *Studies of the Scriptures* available on request
By email or post to the address on the back page

PATIENT SUBMISSION

We lose our self-control every time we give way to impatience, but we are kept in peace, and are master of ourselves and of our circumstances, when we preserve the spirit of patient submission. Impatience is the spirit of pride that is discontented with what we have, or with what we have not. Such a spirit is no longer under the control of reason or religion, but like a wild moorland pony becomes vicious and unmanageable, having returned to its own undisciplined state of self-will. If we bear with patient submission the irritations and disturbances of life, they cease to irritate us and they soon lose their distressing character. On the other hand our rebellious will can work them up into intolerable evils. For it is in the will and not in the feelings that calm and confidence exists, and the submissive will can maintain its rest in the midst of the most acute sufferings. For “thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee: because he trusteth in thee.” (Isa. 26:3)

It would appear from our inward resentment of trouble sometimes, as if we were faultless in all our ways, and that we were suffering some gross injustice at the hands of God. Let us remember our many transgressions, our apathy for righteousness, our proneness to evil, and admit that God’s judgments are true and righteous altogether. Others may treat us unjustly or injure us in seeking their own selfish ends; but we are still in God’s hands, and He is the great first cause in every detail of our lives. We need these trials that we may be perfect, but if the selection of them was left to us, how gently we should treat ourselves, and with what laxity we should excuse our conduct. But God is too loving to allow us to perish in our own weakness, and brings upon us many things that our cowardly hearts would gladly avoid. So that what we would never have the courage to ask for directly we can accept in patient submission from the hand of God as unavoidable, and as a very needed correction of our many failures.

Our Lord Jesus, meek and lowly in heart, gave us an example by His life of true patient submission to God in all things. The proud around Him were always lofty, impatient, and ready to take offence. He patiently bore the contradiction of sinners, their insults, their contempt, that His Father’s will might be perfected in Him. Have we not such an incentive? Is the servant above his master in this respect? If we sincerely despise ourselves we shall not mind the contempt of others. If we are not looking for any praise, we shall not feel hurt when we are passed by. Truly this does not come naturally to our human spirit. But when we remember the Lord of glory, who alone in heaven or on earth was found worthy, yet who humbled Himself to the death of the cross; this pours contempt on all our pride. Let this inspire in us true patient submission, in which our will consents and our heart agrees, and in which it is our desire and our aim to glorify God.

“O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” (Psa. 119:97)

One of the outstanding characteristics of the old-time reverential Israelite was his consistent and continuous study of his sacred books, those which we call the Old Testament. “To the Law and to the Prophets;” this was the cry. The whole emphasis was upon the principles of God’s plans for Israel and for all people; the history of what He had in the past; the promise of what He will do in the future. As the centuries passed much of the clear outline was overlaid with tradition, legend and Rabbinic misinterpretation, but the fundamental principle was never lost. The faith of the loyal Israelite remained established upon a firm base of Scripture knowledge.

So should it be with the committed Christian. “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” says Paul to Timothy. (2 Tim. 2:15) Sincere conversion and dedication of life to the Lord Jesus Christ on the basis of justification by faith is the essential basis of Christian life, but upon that must be built the edifice of a sound knowledge of the ways and plans of God, if we are to be servants knowing what our Master doeth. The wise and faithful “*scribe instructed in the things of the Kingdom of Heaven*” is the one who is “*able to bring forth out of his treasury things new and old.*” (Matt. 13:52) A simple profession of faith and an empty round of praise to God and devotional exercises may be beneficial to the mind and afford a sense of spiritual peace and well-being but it does little to advance the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world. Only the proclamation of the plans and calling of God can do that. And to engage in that work requires knowledge, accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, their content, their message, and their power. The rise of the great Bible Societies in the mid-19th century together with the concurrent upsurge of overseas missionary endeavour on the one hand, and imminent Second Advent expectation on the other, inspired the development in the late 19th and early 20th of the very considerable Bible Student movement over (mainly) the English-speaking and European worlds which lifted the level of Christian understanding to a higher level than ever before. The impetus of that movement has died away; its necessity and its importance remains. It is more than ever imperative that our personal devotion to the Lord Christ leads us to emulate our Israelite predecessors and give ourselves to earnest and assiduous investigation of the content of the whole Scriptures, Old as well as New Testaments, that we may be able to give an answer to those who enquire of us, or whom we can possibly interest, as to the purpose and future of the faith that is in us.

AOH

**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