

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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Two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. (Luke 24:13-15)

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:26-27)

It was the day of the resurrection and these two followers of Jesus were walking from Jerusalem across the hills of Judea. Jerusalem would hold some dangers after Jesus was resurrected as his followers were suspected of stealing his body. Albeit Emmaus was just seven or eight miles from the city. One of them was called Cleopas who could be the husband of Mary whose husband was Cleopas. (John 19:25*) But we know it was the risen Jesus who joined them on the way while they talked with each other.

But the two followers did not know it was Jesus. A miracle prevented them from recognising him, what if they had recognised him at once then it would have made it difficult to have the scriptures opened for them to understand Jesus' death and resurrection.

Cleopas and his unnamed companion were astonished that he did not know what had happened in Jerusalem over that feast season. It seems all would know about the death of Jesus of Nazareth and even some report of him being risen during the last three days.

Our Lord Jesus chides them for not understanding what was written of his death and glory by the prophets in what we call the Old Testament. What we are told is that he did start at Moses. He possibly started with the promise that stated Messiah was the seed of the woman as in Gen. 3:15,

that he, the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah as in Gen. 49:10, be of King David's line as in Isa. 9:7 and would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2) of a virgin who would become pregnant with a male child. (Isa. 7:14) Even the time might have been stated that it would be 483 years from the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah and that the Messiah would suffer the death penalty in the middle of the following 7 years. (Dan. 9:25-27 see NKJV margin)

That Messiah was to suffer was not understood. Jesus knew in detail what would happen. Indeed Psalm 41:9 hints of a betrayal and the price of 30 pieces of silver seems noted by Zech. (11:12-13) One chapter of the Bible he surely would not have missed out would be Isaiah 53. He would be despised, rejected and not valued. He would die for all of us despite never having said or done anything wrong, and be buried. Yet it was God's plan and his death was a sin offering.

His teaching session now at the end, as they came close to the edge of the village of Emmaus, they invited him indoors and began to eat bread. Then the veil that had been on their eyes vanished and they knew that it was their Lord Jesus. So they rushed back the seven or eight miles to Jerusalem to tell the others. This was one of eleven recorded appearances of Jesus over a 40 day period.



LORD Jesus, in the days of old,
Two walked with Thee by waning light,
And love's blind instinct made them bold
To crave Thy presence through the night;
As night descends, we too would pray;
O leave us not at close of day.

Day is far spent and night is nigh;
Stay with us, Saviour, through the night;
Talk with us, teach us tenderly,
Lead us to peace, to rest, to light;
Dispel our darkness with Thy face,
Radiant with resurrection grace.

The hours of day are glad and good,
And good the gifts Thy hand bestows—
The body's health, the spirit's food,
And rest, and after rest repose.
We would not lose day's golden gains,
So stay with us as daylight wanes.

Nor that night only, blessed Lord,
We, every day and every hour
Would walk with Thee Emmaus-ward,
To hear Thy voice of love and power,
And every night would by Thy side
Look, listen, and be satisfied.

BSH 222, James Ashcroft Noble

ONE BREAD—ONE BODY

“For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1 Cor. 10:17).

In these words, fraught with deep spiritual meaning, the faithful Apostle strengthens his appeal to the Corinthian Christians and through them to us. We, like them, are so prone to idolatry, so easily led into ways which cannot be reconciled with the fellowship that is ours in Christ. *“Wherefore, my dearly beloved”* Paul pleads *“flee from idolatry.”* (v.14) That was a very real danger in those days, and to those early Corinthian believers, living in the most notoriously depraved and paganised city of the then known world, it was a very necessary exhortation. But it was not merely that Paul would wean them from the worship and service of false deities, “gods many, and lords many.” (1 Cor. 8:5) He knew that such service and such worship involved not only fellowship with pagan men and women but also common-union, joint participation, with demoniac intelligences behind the veil. He understood only too well the corrupting influence of those debased and debasing ceremonies and sacrifices; that they had nothing in common with the things of Christ, and with all his heart he strove to turn his brethren away from them and toward the infinitely purer and nobler faith of which he was himself a minister.

The whole burden of Paul’s message in this chapter is comparison between the pagan’s fellowship with idols and demons and the Christian’s fellowship with Christ. Just as the believers’ union in worship and offering was not merely an association together for the mutual acknowledgement of God’s supremacy, but in deed and in truth a fellowship and communion with the risen Christ beyond the Veil, and the experiencing of an indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God: so was the worship and sacrificing of the pagans an actual fellowship with demons, “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies.” *“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice”* he warned them earnestly *“they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons.”* (1 Cor. 10.20*) This danger of being associated with the enemies of Christ was a very real one in the Apostle’s mind. Doubtless he saw in mental vision the last great conflict at the end of this Age when these same evil powers are arrayed, with all their human dupes, to give battle against the rider on the white horse, coming forth from heaven in righteousness to judge and make war. (Rev. 19:11). He knew that the saints must not be hesitant in the slightest degree about their allegiance. They may in no wise have any interest in common with these powers of evil which with all their followers will be

overthrown and deprived of all power before the Millennial Kingdom is set up, and so in all earnestness he reminds them “*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and the table of demons.*” (v.21*)

With what emphasis does this call to separation to the fellowship and communion of Christ come to us at this season! Now, more than at any other time during the year, we are mindful of our Master’s willing, steadfast consecration to his Father’s Will, even unto death. For him there was no compromise and no hesitancy. Just previously He had “set” his face to go to Jerusalem, knowing that death awaited him there. The people had flattered him, had received him as king; the disciples had pleaded with him to set up his Kingdom there and then and give the world the blessings it so sadly needed. To all their suggestions He had turned a deaf ear, walking resolutely along that path which, even though it led to suffering and death and the apparent failure of all his work, He knew to be the only one that could end in the consummation for which He had come into the world.

This same consciousness of a mission and this same inexplicable resolution in carrying out the terms of that mission is what Paul seeks to impress upon his readers, and now that the season for more than usually earnest thought about these things is upon us we do well to take from his exhortation all that it can give us of inspiration and encouragement.

“*Behold Israel after the flesh*” he commands, and his command carries a question. “*Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*” (v.18). Participators *with* the altar; that is Paul’s thought. The priests upon whom fell the obligation to eat of the sacrifices were holy unto the Lord and could never be the same as ordinary men again. In partaking of the sacrifices of the altar they had become holy like the altar and were in a very real sense in fellowship or communion with the altar, and through that with God. And so are we. Because we have eaten of the offering, made it a part of ourselves, we have become identified with the Altar which is Christ, and have become joint-participators with him, not only in the power of future blessing for which the altar stands—for more than anything else in the typical Tabernacle the Brazen Altar stood for justification by faith, and only through justification by faith in Christ will man receive blessing in the next Age—but also in the power of present suffering which the same altar symbolises. And it is the power of that present suffering, a suffering in which we participate with our Lord, that is going to mean so much to men redeemed from death by the Ransom

given once for all at Calvary many centuries ago.

So the Apostle comes to the central feature of his theme when he takes up this question of suffering. "*The bread which we break*" he urges "*is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*" (v.16) There is a vital difference between the cup and the bread. "*This is my blood of the New testament (Covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26:28), Jesus had told them on the Passover night. Remembering that the first Covenant was itself made legal and binding by the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:18-20) the disciples must quickly have realised that this New Covenant which was to succeed where the old one had failed was to be made sure by the death of Jesus himself, by the shed blood of He who "*gave himself a ransom for all.*" (1 Tim. 2:6). His death provided the Ransom and we are redeemed by his blood, the New Testament is positive enough on that central truth. Why such a ransom was necessary; why Divine justice required such an offering before the dead in Adam could be released and in what way Justice is satisfied by the death of Jesus on the Cross, are all questions which have been asked and answered with varying degrees of spiritual insight throughout the Gospel Age. Independent of all the philosophy and theology that has been built up around the doctrine of the Atonement, the one fact stands out whether we understand it or not the death of Jesus *was* essential to man's salvation, and that without faith in him and a definite and personal acceptance of his sacrifice made for us, there can be no release from sin and no entrance into life.

"There is none other name under heaven given...whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

It has been well said that the Ransom does not *give* men everlasting life. It does guarantee to every man a full and fair opportunity to attain everlasting life. That "life for the world" which is symbolised by the "poured-out blood" of Christ is life as Adam enjoyed it before he sinned, a life which would have made it possible for him to enter upon his eternal inheritance provided he observed the conditions. Much the same is true of humankind in the Millennial Age. All, without exception, will come back from the grave, as Jesus foretold (John 5:28), awaking to conscious life and recollection in bodies free from the effects of inherited sin. Thus will the Ransom become of effect to all men. But unless those awakened ones are persuaded so to order their lives in harmony with Divine principles that they do attain full perfection, morally as well as mentally and physically, the blood of Christ will, so far as such are concerned, be of no avail. If under the favourable conditions of that blessed day the heart of any one of

the sons of men remains fully set in him to do evil, his blood-bought life can again only end in death, and this time without remedy. "*Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.*" (Rom. 6:9; Heb. 10:26) Since it is clear that the risen masses will require something more than the gift of conscious life in a new body, great and marvellous as is that gift, it follows that there is another aspect to the doctrine of the Atonement parallel to that which is symbolised by the shed blood.

That aspect is pictured by Jesus as the breaking of his body, a body which, thus broken, becomes food for the life of the world. This eating of the mystic bread which is his body is not the *giving of new life*, which is symbolised by the blood, the cup, but it is the continued *sustenance of a life already given*. The blood is poured out once for all; the bread is to be partaken of into eternity. Jesus died on the Cross, once, and that act is never to be repeated. The one act was sufficient to give all men, Church, and world alike, new life. But He "ever lives" to sustain men's everlasting lives by that which He gives them, his body. Is that why the people desired him on one occasion "Lord, *evermore* give us this bread!" (John 6:34)? "*The bread that I will give is my flesh*" He had said "*which I will give for the life of the world.*" (John 6:51).

Neither is this bread a free gift in the sense in which the cup is a free gift. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the benefits of the Ransom, are awarded to all men irrespective of personal merits or personal action. All are to receive freedom from Adamic condemnation and reversal of the Adamic death sentence. All who exercise faith in Christ, whether in this Gospel Age or in the incoming Millennial Age, whether of the Church or the world, will receive the free gift of justification and have their past sin, no matter how heinous, no longer counted against them. All who received life from the first Adam will receive life again from the Second Adam. But in order to maintain that life they must partake of the mystic bread, and that, translated into plain language, means to live their lives in exactly the same way that Jesus lived his. It means that no man can live everlastingly except he lives in full harmony with God's laws and God's ways. He must, as it were, live "in tune" with God, for as Paul said to the Athenians "*In him we live, and move, and have our being.*" (Acts 17:28). In order that he might learn how to live that life, man must have an example, an exemplar, to show him the way. There has only been one such example, Christ Jesus himself, who came to earth for that purpose. For three and a half years He was the perfect example of how a man should live, and the consequence of his steadfast setting of that example

was that his body was broken. He had shown mankind that perfection is only attained through suffering. *“Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”* (Matt. 8:17) *“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”* (Heb. 2:18). It is the example of that life that will be man’s inspiration in the next Age and in that sense they will *“eat (of) the flesh of the Son of Man”* (John 6:53) and live forever.

In exactly the same way do we, his disciples of this Age, partake of his flesh, this bread. We too, no less than humankind in the Millennial Age, are to order our lives after that perfect example if we would enter into immortality. We too must learn that only by suffering, endurance, the willing laying down of life upon behalf of others, can we ourselves be perfected. *“He that loseth his life...shall find it.”* (Matt. 10:39) And to us is granted a privilege that can never come to the sons of men in the future Age, for we, who have pledged ourselves to be followers of our Lord to the end of time, who have been *“buried with him by baptism into (his) death”*, (Rom. 6:4) are privileged to have our own lives used as examples for the future Age; our own experience and character-development employed in the instruction and conversion of men in that Day. We too are to be made merciful and faithful priests of the future if we are rightly exercised by our experiences in the Christian life now. But the degree of our fitness for holding forth the word of Life *then*, and in that sense becoming living bread for the world *then*, is entirely dependent upon the degree to which we partake of the living bread ourselves *now*. Unless we eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, we have no life in us; and a lifeless corpse can never become the medium of new life to a resurrected world.

This, then, is our fellowship, a fellowship in Christ which is also a participation with Christ, a common-union with him. This is why we cannot have fellowship or union with the world and its demons. We have been *“baptised for the dead”* (1 Cor. 15:29) and it is only by participation with our risen Lord that we shall make that baptism effective and, in receiving and partaking of the living bread, become the means of giving life to others. *“And the Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him that heareth say ‘Come.’ And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* (Rev. 22:17) That grand climax to God’s dealings with men on the earth can only come to pass when we who are the first-fruits unto God have first entered into our privilege and obligation of renouncing the world and all that is in it, and joined in full communion with Christ our Lord and with each other as a family apart.

“The bread which we break (eat), is it not the common-union of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16) “Lord, evermore give us this bread!” (John 6:34)

TWW

“This, indeed, is what is written: ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” (1 Cor. 15:45 ISV)

THE VICTORY

*There is a glory in the cross,
A mystery at the heart of pain,
A force that turns accepted loss
Into the joy of harvest grain.*

*It is the secret of the seed
That lies forsaken in the cold—
It multiplies as waving wheat,
It dies, to live a thousandfold!*

*It is the story of a Man
Who died upon a barren hill—
But death could not for long restrain
That radiant Life that feeds us still.*

*It is His strong affirming power
That lifts our vision as we pray,
And turns each dark defeated hour
Into a resurrection day.*

*And still the alchemy divine
Revives, renews with living breath,
Transforming water into wine
And bringing triumph out of death.*

*O what a miracle of grace!
What mighty quickening from above!
It is the victory of the cross,
The resurrection power of love.*

Margot King-Smith

WHAT IS TRUTH?

John 18:38

TURNING to the incident which has immortalised this question, attention is drawn to the fact that Jesus had been brought before Pilate, charged with claiming to be the King of the Jews.

He had already been before the Sanhedrin, where He had confessed His title to Messiahship, and had been adjudged worthy of death.

Pilate, however, was not concerned with any Jewish questions, and would not have taken any action against Jesus had he not been accused of the further claim regarding the rulership, which he, as Caesar's representative, held over Palestine. No rival authority could be tolerated, and with this thought in mind Pilate asked Jesus if He were really the King of the Jews.

Jesus answered: "Are you asking on your own account, or from hearsay?" Pilate did not appreciate being associated with Jewish matters, and said, "Do you take me for a Jew, your own people, and the Chief Priests have delivered you to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered: "My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight. My kingdom is not from this present time onward."

"Oh," continued Pilate, "you *are* a king then?" At this juncture we can imagine Jesus with His flagging physical energy, but with a majestic dignity all His own, making the declaration, "I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." (v.37)

Pilate asked, "What is Truth?" He did not know that the answer stood before him, "How can a *person* be the Truth?" We are reminded in answer of our Lord's own words, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." (John 14:6) Truth, then, is any manifestation, or expression of the mind of God. Jesus so faithfully carried out this commission that He was surprised that Phillip should request Him to show them the Father. (v.8)

Jesus had on so many occasions told His hearers, "The words that I speak are not Mine, but His that sent Me." "I work the works of My Father." "I and My Father are one." (John 14:24; 7:16; 9:4; 10:30) His whole life was spent in giving expression to the Father's mind, and John tells us at the commencement of his Gospel that Jesus was "Full of grace and Truth." (John 1:14)

The mind of God is shown in various ways. We have the Bible, the written word, which we are told was the result of holy men of old being moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:21)

Again, the heavens declare the glory of God, the marvels of the great universe, of which we form such an infinitesimal part.

The rocks and fossils give us the record of past ages. The only pity is that men make such foolish guesses, and are unable to read their messages aright. If they did, their conclusions would agree with other avenues of Truth, for the laws of nature give us the facts regarding the control of both animate and inanimate things.

Coming back to the Bible we find many symbols for our help and guidance. A symbol has been described as a glass through which a truth can be seen. We have, for example, the symbol of baptism, representing the immersion into the body of the Anointed. The bread and wine used at the memorial, symbolises the broken body and shed blood of our Lord. What a pity it is that so many load up the glass with such embellishments that no one can see through it—the glass then becomes the object of attention, and the Truth is lost.

Thus, water baptism itself becomes the main object, while its true significance is obscured. Again, we are all familiar with the theory of transubstantiation, in the case of the bread and wine, and we see how the Truth has been distorted, and lost, the emblems becoming the object of worship.

In *this* way has the Adversary blinded the minds of the people. He is the father of all falsehood, error, and misrepresentation.

Let us now see the effects of Truth. We read in John 17:17, “Sanctify them through Thy Truth,” and this means to make saintly, holy, God-like.

It is often spoken of as separating or setting apart, and this is also correct, because anyone who becomes saintly, or God-like, will soon find themselves going against the stream in this present evil world.

The test is not how much one knows, but how much one puts into practice. Our Lord’s last command to His disciples was along these lines, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35) In other words, this was the way to manifest the

character of God in one's life, for "God is love." (1 John 4:8)

The more we appreciate the Truth the better we realise our own insignificance—unworthiness and the greatness of God, the immaculate purity of His character, His wonderful love and tolerance.

Today, many diverse views are in circulation and the question is, "How are we to know what is Truth?"

Here are just a few tests which may be applied:

1. Does the presentation square with the character of God? God is light, and in Him is no shadow of turning. God is love. Justice is the foundation of His throne. He is all-wise, almighty. He is a God of Truth.
2. Does it honour God? No thought can be accepted which is dishonouring to Him.
3. Is it in agreement with the plan of Salvation, Ransom, and the Restitution of all things?
4. Does it conflict with the Scriptures—the word of God? The science of numerics has proved that the Bible is, beyond all shadow of doubt, of divine origin.
5. Taking the larger view, the presentation must be ennobling in its effect upon those who accept it.
6. Is it in line with reason, with the spirit of a sound mind?
7. Is it consistent with all other Truth? There is no contradiction in the Truth, it is one consistent whole, and is harmonious throughout.

Another point should be remembered, those who have the Truth can always afford to wait. There should be no sense of disappointment if one does not readily accept Truth.

It was impatience along this line that led to the intolerance, bitterness, suppression and persecution of the past ages.

Truth was sure to triumph, but we had to await God's due time. In due time Truth will sweep away the refuge of lies, for the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. (Hab. 2:14)

Then will be also fulfilled the grand promise of Jehovah Himself, "As I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah." (Num. 14:21)

TRUTH WILL THEN HAVE TRIUMPHED.

AB

IDENTIFICATION

Reflections on the Resurrection

It was around the time that Jesus and His disciples were at Caesarea Philippi, when Peter made his great declaration of faith, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matt. 16:16 RSV) that the Master began to warn them that He must die and be resurrected. It was an idea that was totally strange to them and which they could not take in. It did not follow the pattern that they had been taught from childhood of how Messiah would establish God’s Kingdom. They expected that He would now restore the commonwealth of Israel and they, His closest disciples, would be with Him in that Kingdom. That Jesus would die could not be considered. They had a genuine blockage in their minds. He gave further warnings as they approached Jerusalem. These were reinforced by Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees’ request for a sign. He told them that the only sign they would be given was the sign of Jonah, which meant three days in the grave until He was raised. These warnings were sufficiently strong for the priests and Pharisees to warn Pilate “*that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘after three days I will rise again’*” and insisted that the tomb be secured. (Matt 27:62-66 RSV)

It was the women who first saw the empty tomb and Jesus himself. They went to tell the disciples who received the news in disbelief. It seems that the women accepted the facts and understood what had happened more readily than the men, that Jesus was going to rise from the dead. The first record of someone meeting Jesus that day was Mary of Magdala. He just had to say her name in the old familiar way and there never could be another doubt in her mind. Like the other disciples, a bond of love had been forged in those years of Jesus’ earthly ministry, and His friends recognised certain expressions of love which were so important to them. “*My sheep know my voice*” (John 10:27 CEV) He had said to them; and they did know on Resurrection Day. The two walking to Emmaus, along the route to Joppa, expressed amazement and gave little evidence of having believed the women. As Jesus talked to them about the Hebrew scriptures, something held their senses back from recognising Him. Was it their unutterable grief at His death or was it His control of their senses or was it just that He appeared to be different from the familiar figure of the Master. When finally they were around the supper table the characteristic manner of breaking the bread suddenly opened their eyes as to who He was. Finally, He confronted Thomas, who until then had resisted all persuasion that Jesus was alive. John’s record of that meeting almost gives the impression that Thomas only had to see Jesus to be convinced. He did

not really need to observe the holes that had given so much pain to that beloved Lord. He was overwhelmed.

We each move in a way peculiar to ourselves that distinguishes us from everyone else. Our way of walking or the way we hold a pen or pencil are special to us. Posture, tilt of the head, swing of the arms, all betray who we are and animals notice these things more quickly than we do, and they have the advantage of a more acute sense of smell and sharper hearing. Such characteristics are valuable because they help us to know a person. Jesus deliberately said and did things after His resurrection that would leave His followers in no doubt as to what had happened on that day. The experience to the disciples was the more telling and impressive to them because they had not believed that it was going to happen. It was an experience that would change their lives and the whole world. Not only their faith but the genuineness of their proclamation of the Gospel depended on their correct identification of Jesus.

Out at Galilee, in familiar surroundings of the lakeshore they went fishing and not for the first time, caught nothing. As the shadowy figure in the half-light of dawn became clearer to them, they heard His voice. It was then that their minds went back to that day several years before when He had commanded them to put down their net on the other side of the boat. Now they realised who He was. "*It is the Lord!*" (John 21:7 RSV) Peter would not forget the first occasion of the big catch. It was deeply impressed upon his mind for he had been commissioned as an evangelist to go out and 'catch men.' Now the Lord was strengthening the call to become a pastor of the flock. Their task as apostles was to tell others what had transformed their lives and enabled them to do the wonderful things that occurred in Jerusalem and all the lands where the Gospel was preached.

Seeing Jesus after the resurrection was more than mechanical recognition. It was more than being given a new job to do. "*The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*" (John 20:20 RSV) They were full of joy and ready for anything. It was that deep impression of the living Lord in their midst that spurred them on to witness and suffer for Him. Has He had that effect on us? Have we not seen Him at work through the power of the Holy Spirit? He is a living power in the lives of our brethren. Have we not recognised Him at work in ourselves, transforming and renewing us? He is the one who cares for us and spurs us on. Let us greet the Resurrection morning this year with a convincing "the Lord is risen indeed." (Luke 24:34 KJV)

DN

DANIEL IN BABYLON

Part 2. The Land of Shinar

When, in later years, Daniel committed to writing his recollection of how the treasures of the House of God in Jerusalem had been carried into the land of Shinar and deposited in the treasure house of Babylon's idol-temple his heart must have been heavy with the recollection of that sad day. He began his narrative with that incident; it stood out to him as the commencement of a life spent away from Judah and all its hallowed memories, a life given to serving God in a strange land, yet, because he was serving God and because he had no other will in life but to serve God in his way and at his bidding, a life of supreme content. The golden vessels of the Lord were in pagan hands and defiled by their residence in a heathen temple, but he remembered the words of the prophet Isaiah and took comfort in the sure knowledge that one day those vessels would come forth again and be restored to their own place. "*Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing*" the elder prophet had cried in the ecstasy of his vision. "*Go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.*" (Isa. 52:11) That had been nearly two hundred years before Daniel's time, but the lad knew that the words would surely come to pass, and the bitterness of seeing the sacred vessels profaned by the sacrilegious touch of unbelievers was mitigated by his realisation that God had not cast off his people forever; He would surely come to deliver. And before Daniel died he was to see that faith vindicated.

It was probably not without design that Daniel used the ancient term "land of Shinar" to describe the country of his captors rather than "land of Babylon" by which it was more familiarly known in his own day. "Shinar" was the name it bore in those early days soon after the Flood when Nimrod established the first empire there, and impious men built a great tower "whose top may (should) reach unto heaven." (Gen. 11:4) The tower was still there and Daniel probably saw it as he entered into the city. The name "Shinar" was associated in his mind with rebellion against God and apostasy from God and defiance of God, and in the book he was to write he would have all the world to know that this land and city which had been the scene of his life's work was one that stood for everything that God hates. Neither its wealth nor its magnificence blinded him for one moment to the fact that it was under Divine condemnation—the city of God's curse.

That thought might have been of some comfort to him as he watched the

treasure-waggons turn aside at their journey's end and pass through the gateway into the courtyard of the great Temple in the treasury of which the sacred Temple vessels were to repose for seventy long years, until a then far-off day when the impious Belshazzar was to lay careless hands upon them to grace his drunken revels, and so doing to lose his kingdom and his life. But Daniel could not foresee that at this time. Now he gazed from his chariot at the stately Temple of Marduk, the god of Babylon, set in the midst of wide gardens and paved terraces. He saw the four massive gateways, each flanked by two huge bronze dragon-serpents gleaming red in the sunlight, and must have remembered how that it was by means of a serpent that sin came into the world and man apostatised from God, and that here he was in the very midst of a worship that perpetuated that apostasy. His eyes followed the tremendous seven-staged building which towered into the heavens behind the Temple. He knew what that building was without being told. It was the famous Tower which men had commenced to build in the days when the world was young and the memory of the great Flood had scarcely faded from men's minds. "Go to" they had said, *"let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."* (Gen. 11.4). God had come down to see the city and tower which these men were building, and he had frustrated their design and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth. But later generations had gone on building the city, and their kings had each added his contribution to the tower, and now as Daniel gazed upon it he saw it, soaring six hundred feet into the sky, the highest building men had ever built or would ever build until this modern day of skyscrapers. He saw the staircases hugging the sides of each successive stage and the terraces surrounding the top of each stage. The scintillating light at its summit held his attention and right up there he could see the solid gold sanctuary to Marduk, the god to whose honour this great tower was dedicated...The chariot rolled on and Daniel could see the Tower no more. "Etemenanki" the Babylonians called it, "The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth," and they claimed that it was going to stand as long as the world endures; but into the lad's mind there must have come something of the words of Isaiah, *"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."* (Isa. 13:19,22) He was travelling now along the royal road which led from the Temple and the Tower at Nebuchadnezzar's palace, "Aa-ibur-sabu," it was called, a name meaning the "Processional Way" and along that road the idolatrous processions of the worship of Babylon's false gods often passed. The lad looked down upon a gleaming white

limestone road with pavements of white and red veined stone slabs on each side, flanked by high walls of glazed enamelled coloured bricks, sculptured in the form of lions, white lions with yellow manes and yellow lions with red manes, on alternate light and dark blue backgrounds, all seeming as if themselves marching toward the great palace which could be clearly seen in the distance. From his elevated position in the chariot Daniel could see over those ornate walls into the straight streets and small houses of Merkes, the artisans' and industrial part of the city, and then, looking forward, the place which was to be his own home and that of his three companions, the palace of the great king himself.

Judged by modern standards, the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar was colossal. Only about one third of it has been excavated as yet, but enough is revealed to show that the building, or rather range of buildings, was something like a quarter of a mile square, flanked on one side by the river Euphrates and surrounded on the three other sides by wide canals so that it was virtually a fortress. Here lived the king and his family, the officers of his Court, many of the priests and wise men of Babylon, distinguished captives taken as hostages in similar fashion to Daniel and his companions, and a host of servants, guards and soldiers, anxious, in abject obedience, to carry out the wishes of this great king who was rapidly making himself master of the world.

The chariot rumbled over the bridge that spanned the Libilhigalla Canal, sped a hundred yards, turned left and passed through a lofty double archway into the East Court of the palace. The horses came to a standstill and a group of soldiers stepped briskly towards the travellers. Thus the four Hebrew captives reached the end of their journey.

It was the intention of the king that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah should receive three years' schooling in the ways and the learning of the Babylonians and then become personal attendants on his wishes in his court. They were not the only ones to be thus treated; Nebuchadnezzar had taken lads from other conquered countries for a similar purpose, and therein lay the first trial of faith that was to befall the four Hebrews. Cast daily into the company of youths of their own age but brought up in different and idolatrous surroundings, their impressionable young minds could very easily be diverted from the faith and the code of conduct they had learned, sullied with the standards and the outlook of the pagans, and so spoiled in great degree for the life of usefulness for God which would in other circumstances be theirs.

It speaks well for the unknown teachers who instructed these four boys in their earlier years in Judah that they showed not the slightest trace of being influenced by their surroundings. It was the order of the king that they should be given the rich foods and wines habitually used at court; these doubtless included refinements and luxuries of all kinds normally enjoyed by those upon whom the king's favours were bestowed. "*But Daniel purposed in his heart (within himself) that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.*" (Dan. 1:8). So he made request, on behalf of his three companions beside himself, that they might be permitted to refuse these rich viands and subsist upon plain fare. Pulse and water is specified in verse 12, but this might very reasonably be extended to include any kind of vegetarian food and non-intoxicating drinks. The principal thing in Daniel's mind appears to be the fact that to partake of foods and drinks from the king's table might well involve eating and drinking that which had been offered to idols, or poured out as a libation, or in some way associated with idolatrous ceremonies, and Daniel was determined to have nothing to do with such things.

The official to whose care the four lads had been entrusted was, not unnaturally, rather dubious about assenting to this request. If the thing became known, and the lads appeared to suffer in health in consequence of this rather Spartan diet of their own choosing, his own head would be endangered. Royal justice was administered in an arbitrary and summary fashion in the Court of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel showed considerable tact in proposing a ten days' trial on the understanding that he would abide by Melzar's judgment of the results at the end of that time. The bargain was struck, and at the end of the ten days the four Hebrews were manifestly so superior in general health and appearance to their companions—who anyway had probably been making full and not too wise use of the royal favours so freely granted, with the obvious result that no further objection to their preferences in the matter of food was raised.

This was the first stand for principle and the first victory. It might seem to revolve around a comparatively trivial matter, and from one point of view so it did. But it was the starting point from which much greater things were to proceed. The lads who obeyed their consciences, not fearing the wrath of the king, in so trivial a thing as daily food, were as grown men to withstand a more vital assault upon their faith, to the extent of facing, without fear, what seemed to be the prospect of certain death in a fiery furnace.

So their education in the “*learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans*” (1:4) was commenced, a course of study that was to last three years. What that learning was has been revealed to us in these latter days by the multitudes of inscribed clay tablets, treating almost every conceivable subject, which is now in the possession of scholars and distributed through the world’s museums. The term “Chaldeans” in every book of the Bible except Daniel refers in a general sense to the people inhabiting Babylonia, but in the Book of Daniel it is used to denote a certain class of men within the nation, men who formed a kind of quasi-religious society which preserved the ancient lore and traditions of the past. The priests, the historians, the archaeologists—for there were archaeologists even in Babylon, delving into the relics of civilisations as much older than their own as is theirs to ours—all were members of this caste of the Chaldeans. They held the highest positions in the land and wielded immense power. The priesthood’s possession of the national records, extending over many thousands of years, enabled them to construct an elaborate system of omens and portents by means of which they claimed the ability to forecast future events. The art of astrology played a large part in their practices, and their knowledge of astronomy was by no means inconsiderable. The Tower of Babel had been used as an observatory for thousands of years—when Alexander the Great captured Babylon in 324 B.C., the scientist Callisthenes, who was with him, found records of astronomical observations in the library of the Tower going back to the year 2200 B.C. During all those centuries the priests had kept watch on the stars and planets from the top of the six hundred foot high Tower, and recorded all that they had seen.

These were the men under whose supervision Daniel and his companions pursued their studies. One of the leading subjects was sure to be history and Daniel would have been taken back to the early days of the empire, long before Abram left Ur of the Chaldees. It is almost certain that he perused the Babylonian accounts of the Flood and Creation, and compared them with the more accurate accounts of the same events in the Book of Genesis. He must have spent much time learning the five hundred signs of the Babylonian alphabet, and gradually become expert at reading the literary treasures in the great library of the Temple of Marduk—a library which still lies sixty feet below the sand and has so far defied all the archaeologists’ efforts to penetrate into it. It is fascinating to reflect that he may have come across records which had been written by his own ancestors when they lived in this land, Abram, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu. More than one record from their days, though not from their hands, now reposes in one or another of the world’s museums.

Many of these tablets could be understood only by a few scholars among the Babylonians themselves. The spoken and written language of Babylon in Daniel's day was not that of ancient Babylon; in saying that Daniel was to learn the "tongue" of the Chaldeans it is plain that he was to study the ancient languages, Sumerian and Akkadian, which were spoken in the days of Abram, and in the dim centuries before Abram's day when the first descendants of the three sons of Noah were peopling this land, building its cities and creating the civilisation which endured for something like three thousand years. Probably no Hebrew since Moses had been able to read those ancient languages, the mother tongues of the sons of Ham and the sons of Shem, and in learning them Daniel probably found entry to a written revelation of the deeds of his nation's remote ancestors which coloured his future outlook. Much of the later Jewish stories of early days, not derived from the historical books of the Bible, may have had their origin in Daniel's researches in Babylon.

Daniel's interest in the ancient history of this land which had been the birthplace of his own race would probably be equalled by that which he manifested in its religion. Not that Daniel was in the least degree likely to anticipate the example of some modern Christian leaders and proclaim that "there is good in all religions," and on that—measurably true—statement proceed to admit the world's false gods to a place of equality with the only true God. Daniel knew that the gods of Babylon were sham, the creations of men's minds, but he must nevertheless have reflected on the manner in which the originally pure faith possessed by Noah and his sons had become corrupted into an "*image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things.*" (Rom. 1:23) It is perfectly obvious to those who accept the Biblical story of the Flood that there was a clear and accurate knowledge of God amongst men immediately following that event, and that the faith which Daniel found when he came to Babylon must have been corrupted through the centuries from that one-time pure faith. Joshua is authority for the statement that Israel's fathers dwelt in old time beyond the flood (i.e. the river Euphrates) and served other gods (Josh. 24:2) so that even at that early day the falling away had extended to the Abrahamic line. And we also know that the worship of the "Most High God" prevailed in Canaan at the same time, and evidence of this is to be found not only in the story of Melchizedek in Gen. 14:18-20, but in that of Abimelech king of Gerar, between Canaan and Egypt, who was also a true worshipper (Gen. 20:1-10) and in the discoveries made at Ras Shamra on the coast of Syria in 1930, when a whole library of tablets was found that gave testimony to this worship.

So, at the end of three years, their education was complete, and they were brought in before the king. But that education was not only, and not even principally, in the “learning and tongue of the Chaldeans.” During those same three years, we are told in ch. 1:17, “*God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.*” What a vivid picture that simple sentence paints for us; four earnest young men giving themselves in all sincerity to the reception, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of the wisdom that is from above. How God taught we are not told, but can there be much doubt that it was in the communing and reasoning together of four young hearts, poring over the sacred Scriptures which were to them the guide of life, the Old Testament as we have it as far as the Book of Isaiah and no farther, earnestly seeking enlightenment from above? In all their enforced studies in the ancient lore of Babylon they found time to devote to the wisdom from on high which is the noblest science and the best instruction. Now in their early twenties they stood forth equipped as few men ever have been equipped to spend a life in useful service for God at a time when the needs of the Divine Plan called for such consecrated service in the face of opposition and ruthless persecution.

So they stood before the king; “*and in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.*” (v.20)

AOH

(To be continued)

BECAUSE I LIVE

Christ said, “Because I live,
ye shall live also,”
Amen! Lay hold upon his blessed word,
This is our hope, like stone high, lifted
banner
Unfurled against the sky,
our hearts have heard
No clearer message and no truer music
Than this assurance
from Christ’s own tongue—
Because he lives he says we shall live
also,
Forever joyous, forever eternally
young.

Forever to advance in greater
knowledge,
To fully know the truth that sets us free,
To walk companioned by the living
Saviour
Throughout the reaches of eternity.
Oh, what more blessed news
could we be hearing
Than these words loosed
upon the wings of time?
They lie ahead of us—the hills of
heaven,
With him for guide,
and with strength to climb.

Grace Hall Crowell
songs of the nightingale

A SIGN AND A WITNESS

Part 2. The raising up of Egypt

“In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of the sun.” (Isa. 19:18 margin) Six times in this passage does Isaiah use the expression “in that day.” Each time it is used to introduce one of the characteristic features of Egypt’s conversion and reconciliation to God, using Egypt as the symbol of the world of mankind “in that day.” Particularly does Egypt picture the military and warlike aspect of the world, and hence this reconciliation that is pictured in this nineteenth chapter does show up in brighter relief than other prophetic writings the fact that “in that day” nations will no longer be at enmity but will live amicably and at peace with each other, in the knowledge and reverence of God.

In this 18th verse the stage of “terror” described in the preceding two verses has passed. The world is no longer in fear of this new thing that has come into the earth. They have now become used to the idea of a central world government operating from Jerusalem under the direction of the “Ancient Worthies,” and although they do not as yet comprehend a great deal of the law that is going forth from Jerusalem they do, at least in the main, realise and accept the fact that it is going to be for their good. The world will be so sick of war and destruction by that time that it will at any rate be thankful to know that the time for that has passed, and that real security of life and limb and prospect of physical well-being is henceforth its lot. That realisation will undoubtedly sink first into the minds of most men before the deeper implications of this Millennial Day will have impressed themselves, and men appreciate that they are called and required to come to the Lord Jesus in full surrender of heart and life if they are to continue in the enjoyment of these blessings.

Five cities are to speak the language of Canaan. That the world will speak a “new language” is fairly easy to appreciate. Men are to have turned to them a *“pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”* (Zeph. 3:9) This promise indicates how the law of the Lord and the word of the Lord, going out from Jerusalem, will be understood and re-echoed by the world, and its terms repeated to each other by them, so that no man will need to say to *“his neighbour...know the LORD:”* for all shall know him, *“from the least of them unto the greatest.”* (Jer. 31:34). But what is the meaning of the somewhat strange expression “five cities” and why is it that one of them is called “The city of the sun”? (The text rendering “city of destruction” is

incorrect and has been replaced by “city of the sun” in the margin). It seems a strange limitation; had it been *seven* cities the idea of universal turning to the Lord could well have been attached to it in accordance with normal Scripture symbolism. None of the orthodox commentators has any suggestion to make. But during the preparation of this treatise one interesting fact came to light. In ancient times Egypt was divided for political purposes into forty-two provinces, twenty-two in Upper Egypt and twenty in Lower Egypt, each province having a capital city, sacred to one or another of the Egyptian gods. Of these forty-two provincial capitals, just *five* are mentioned in the Bible, and one of these five is the city of On, which in after days was called Heliopolis, a Greek word which means “city of the sun.” The five cities so mentioned are:—

No (*Greek Thebes*) Jer. 46:25; Ezek. 30:14; Nah. 3:8.

Hanes (*Herakleopolis*) Isa. 30:4.

Noph (*Memphis*) Isa. 19:13; Jer. 2:16; 44:1; 46:19; Ezek. 30:13.

On (*Heliopolis*) Gen. 41:45; 46:20.

Zoan (*Tanis*) Num. 13:22; Psa. 78:12; Isa. 19:11,13; 30:4; Ezek. 30:14

These five cities were scattered over the country, one in the Delta, two in Lower Egypt and two in Upper Egypt. Is it possible that we have here an indication that the “cities of Egypt,” the nations of mankind in the dawn of the Millennial Age, will only speak the “language of Canaan” *by coming into contact with the Word of God?* Five cities out of forty-two are symbolically to speak the new language. Five cities only of those forty-two are mentioned by name in the Old Testament; none of the others have any contact with its narratives or its prophecies. One of the five, at least, is definitely identified by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah, as Heliopolis, or On, the city of the sun, a city which from ancient times had been sacred to Itum (Atum), the god of the setting sun. If this is indeed the intention then we have in this verse a plain intimation that the world’s salvation in the Millennial Day will depend upon two things; contact with the holy people of the Holy Land, and contact with the Word of God which is to be proclaimed from that land. The “five cities” of that future day would then automatically include all of mankind who have come into contact with the means that God has provided for their reconciliation, and those who will not avail themselves of those means and will not “make contact” must perforce remain unreconciled, until and unless the remedial judgments of the Millennial Age effect in them a change of heart.

“In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send

them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them." (Isa. 19:19-20). Moffatt puts the first phrase very clearly "an altar to the Eternal in the heart of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Eternal on the frontier." There are two separate erections indicated here; "altar" is "*mizbeach*," meaning an altar for sacrifice or offering, and used in the Bible to describe the brazen altar in the Court of the Tabernacle, the incense altar in the Holy, the brazen altars of Solomon's and Ezekiel's Temples, the idolatrous altars of the land, and so on. "Pillar" is "*matstsebah*," a monument or memorial set up to commemorate some event or agreement, such as the pillar set up by Absalom to keep his own memory alive (2 Sam. 18:18), the pillar set up by Jacob to mark the spot where God had talked with him (Gen. 35:14) and the pillar he set up to be a witness between himself and Laban. (Gen. 31:45). It is necessary to realise therefore that this verse speaks of an altar of offering being set up in the *centre* of the land of Egypt, and a pillar of witness at the *border* or *frontier* between Egypt and Judah. Like the preceding and succeeding verses of this chapter, this verse is symbolic. "In that day," i.e., in the Millennial Age, there will be the altar of God, the place of approach to God, the place where acceptable offerings may be presented before God, in the very heart of the formerly evil and godless world of mankind. The world will no longer be able to ignore the message; neither will the Lord's messengers be universally despised and rejected. The time will have come when will be fulfilled the words of the Psalmist "*Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*" (Psa. 51:19). The coming of perfect men to God in wholehearted consecration of life will be a common-place in that glad day, and this offering of perfect manhood to do the will of God will be a symbolic "offering of bullocks" upon the Millennial altar. The fact that a few verses farther on the Egyptians are pictured as being converted to the Lord shows that this symbolic altar "in the midst of the land" does denote the avenue of approach to God which will be open to all men during that Age.

The pillar at the border speaks of something different. It is this pillar that is the "*sign and...witness unto the LORD of Hosts*" of v. 20 "*for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them.*" The clue to the meaning of this symbolic "pillar" is probably to be found in the story of Jacob. When parting from Laban his father-in-law he set up a pillar to mark the boundary between their respective domains and to be witness of the covenant they had made between themselves. "*This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and*

thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham...judge betwixt us." (Gen. 31:52-53) That pillar stood as the sign and witness of a covenant of peace between Jacob and Laban, entered into in the name of God and with the blessing of God. So here in Isaiah, the pillar on the border of the land is a sign and a witness to a covenant of peace between Judah and Egypt under the power and protection of God. It is a sign and a witness of an alliance formed between the righteous nation which represents the nucleus of the Kingdom of God upon earth and the unrighteous world which, although it has opposed and fought that righteous nation in the past, is now to be blessed by it and led into the way of the truth. The world of mankind will be crying to the Lord "*because of the oppressors*" (v.20) and He will send them "*a Saviour... and he shall deliver them.*" That Saviour, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent when He is revealed in glory with all his saints for the salvation of the world. How clear it is, therefore, that, as the next verse tells us (v.21) "*the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it.*" Thus is pictured the reconciliation of mankind to God and their eager coming to the source of instruction and blessing that they might learn of the laws of God's Kingdom and willingly align themselves with them. It will be a time when, at last, men will perform before God what they have covenanted to do; a time when righteousness prevails and there is the tremendous force of public opinion encouraging men to walk in right ways instead of leading them to wrong ways as at present.

"And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them." (v.22). This is a further light on the characteristics of the Millennial Day; it is a time of discipline, of "stripes" for the wayward and rebellious, and it is not by any means going to be "roses, roses, all the way" for those whose hearts and minds have been degraded and brutalised by sin. The rule of the Millennial Age will be benevolent and merciful, but it will also be firm and just, and there will be many who will experience chastisement, chastening, "smiting" in the process of their recovery from sin and evil. But the smiting is to heal, according to this verse; it is not punitive but reformatory and we do well to take careful note of the fact for it represents a very important principle in the Divine dealings with mankind. The whole purpose and all the arrangements of the Millennial Age are for one end only, for the reconciliation to God, and the eternal salvation and everlasting life, of "whosoever will," of all who can possibly be persuaded to abandon sin and turn themselves to accept

Christ and serve the living God. Speaking of a similar process with the Holy Nation at a slightly earlier date, God says through the prophet Ezekiel *“I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me.”* (Ezek. 20:37-38). In that instance the reference is to the purifying of regathered Israel preparatory to their appointment as the earthly missionary nation that is to take an important part in the conversion of “Egypt,” but the principle is the same. *“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth”* (Heb. 12:6) is going to be as true of Israel and of the world of mankind then as it is of the Church now. And the general result, as predicted by Isaiah, is that “Egypt,” mankind as a whole, will return to the Lord, and He will heal them.

“In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt into Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” (vv. 23-25).

A wonderful conclusion to the chapter; a picture of universal peace! Throughout Israel’s history Assyria and Egypt were alternately at warfare with the nations around Palestine, or with each other, marching and counter-marching across the fair lands of Judah and Israel and ravaging wherever they went. The picture of a highway between the territories of these two great empires, with the citizens of both passing and repassing upon their lawful business, must have seemed a very unlikely one, especially in the days of Isaiah, when Assyria and Egypt were locked in a death-grip which had to end with the crushing of one. But that is what Isaiah saw, a day when the contending factions of mankind would have resolved all their enmity and jealousy into that calm and quiet fraternity which is to be the hallmark of the next Age. The highways of that day will be the highways of peace, and war and violence will be no more.

Perhaps there is a covert allusion also to the outcome of the conflict that brings about the end of the Gospel Age, and prepares the way for the Millennial Age, the conflict that Daniel describes under the symbol of a battle between the “King of the North” and the “King of the South.” Assyria and Egypt, geographically north and south of Palestine, could well fill that role in symbolic imagery. Whoever and whatever are the powers and forces in the end of this Age that are represented in Daniel by those two kings, it is certain that their violence and their warfare will not

extend beyond the close of this Age, after Armageddon. "In that day," the Assyrian and the Egyptian will be equally conscious of a great chastening that has taken away from them all desire for further sallies at arms. The highway connecting Assyria with Egypt will be a quiet, a peaceable, and a joyous one.

The next verse adds the connecting link that makes this possible. Assyria and Egypt are made one because of Israel between them acting as peacemaker. Thus is symbolised the beneficent work of the Holy Nation, regathered Israel, under the guidance and instruction of the glorified Church, working zealously to weld all men together into a brotherhood that is to endure for all eternity. Israel, says the prophet, is to be the third in this earthly trio, a blessing in the midst of the land. The picture of a nation of peacemakers in the midst of the earth, playing their part in the reconciliation of men to God, is one that is very vividly shown in this verse.

So the Divine blessing comes upon a world made new. The earth has yielded its increase and justified the declaration God made so long ago "*I will make the place of my feet glorious.*" (Isa. 60:13) "*Blessed be Assyria the work of my hands.*" Mankind will have come to perfection and entered into sonship; with sin cast away, and evil a thing of the past, they will have become sons of God on the human plane, and God says of them "*Blessed be Egypt my people.*" Israel, the missionary nation, comes in for the closer and more intimate word. Her work finished, God says "*Blessed be Israel mine inheritance.*" Perhaps we ought to realise that the earthly nation that has carried out this missionary work on earth is, after all, only working under the control of the Church of Christ, glorified in the heavens, and maybe much of what is credited in this chapter to Israel belongs properly to the spiritual Israel which will be ordering these things from above. At the same time it should be fairly clear that this nineteenth chapter of Isaiah is looking at things practically exclusively from an earthly point of view and describes the work of God as it will be observed and appreciated by men upon earth. If there were nothing else in all the Scriptures to tell of the hope for mankind that is to be realised in time to come, this glowing passage should be enough to convince us that God has planned for the conversion of symbolic Egypt to himself. He will bring to an end all war and strife and tumult, and all those things that have made the world, in our day, a replica on a greater scale of Egypt as it was in its relation to Judah in the days of Isaiah the prophet. And He will have reconciled "Egypt" and purged it of all its sin. (THE END)

AOH

THE PLAN OF GOD IN BRIEF

STUDY 8—Natures Separate and Distinct

Failing to see that the plan of God for mankind in general contemplates a restoration or restitution to their former estate—the human perfection lost in Eden—and that the Christian Church, as an exception to this general plan, is to have a change of nature from human to spiritual, Christian people generally have supposed that none will be saved except those who reach the spiritual nature. The Scriptures, however, while holding out promises of life and blessing and restoration to all the families of the earth, offer and promise the change to spiritual nature only to the Church selected during the Gospel age; and not a single passage can be found which sustains such hopes for any others.

If the masses of mankind are saved from all the degradation, weakness, pain, misery and death which result from sin, and are restored to the condition of human perfection enjoyed before the fall, they are as really and completely saved from that fall as those who, under the special “high-calling” of the Gospel age, become “partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Pet. 1:4)

The failure to understand rightly what constitutes a perfect man, the misapprehension of the terms mortal and immortal, and wrong ideas of justice, have together tended to this error, and mystified many Scriptures otherwise easily understood. It is a common view, though unsupported by a single text of Scripture, that a perfect man has never been on earth; that all that is seen of man on earth is only the partially developed man, and that to reach perfection he must become spiritual. This view makes confusion of the Scriptures instead of developing that harmony and beauty which result from “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The Scriptures teach that there have been two, and only two, perfect men—Adam and Jesus. Adam was created in the image of God: that is, with the similar mental powers of reason, memory, judgment and will, and the moral qualities of justice, benevolence, love, etc. “Of the earth, earthy,” (1 Cor. 15:47) he was an earthly image of a spiritual being, possessing qualities of the same kind, though differing widely in degree, range and scope. To such an extent is man an image of God that God can say even to the fallen man, “Come...let us reason together.” (Isa. 1:18)

As Jehovah is ruler over all things, so man was made a ruler over all earthly things—After our likeness, let him have dominion over the beasts, fowl, fish, etc. (Gen. 1:26). Moses tells us (Gen. 1:31) that God recog-

nized the man whom He had made—not merely commenced to make, but completed—and God considered His creature “*very good*,” that is, perfect; for in God’s sight nothing short of perfection is very good, in His intelligent creatures.

There is a wonderful contrast between man as we now see him, degraded by sin, and the perfect man that God made in His image. Sin has gradually changed his features, as well as his character. Multiplied generations, by ignorance, licentiousness and general depravity, have so blurred and marred humanity that in the large majority of the race the likeness of God is almost obliterated. The moral and intellectual qualities are dwarfed; and the animal instincts, unduly developed, are no longer balanced by the higher.

But though defiled and degraded by sin and its penalty, death, working in him, man is to be restored to his original perfection of mind and body, and to glory, honour and dominion, during and by the Millennial reign of Christ. The things to be restored by and through Christ are those things which were lost through Adam’s transgression. (Rom. 5:18,19). Man did not lose a heavenly but an earthly paradise. Under the death penalty, he did not lose a spiritual but a human existence; and all that was lost was purchased back by his Redeemer, who declared that He came to seek and to save that which was lost.—Luke 19:10.

In addition to the above, we have proof that the perfect man is not a spiritual being. We are told that our Lord, before He left His glory to become a man, was “in a form of God”—a spiritual form, a spirit being; but since to be a ransom for mankind He had to be a man, of the same nature as the sinner whose substitute in death he was to become, it was necessary that His nature be changed. And Paul tells us that He took not the nature of angels, one step lower than His own, but that He came down two steps and took the nature of men—He became a man; He was “made flesh.”—Heb. 2:16; Phil. 2:7,8; John 1:14.

Notice that this teaches not only that angelic nature is not the only order of spirit being, but that it is a lower nature than that of our Lord before He became a man; and He was not then so high as He is now, for “God hath highly exalted Him,” because of His obedience in becoming man’s willing ransom. (Phil. 2:8,9). He is now of the highest order of spirit being, a partaker of the divine (Jehovah’s) nature.

But not only do we find proof that the divine, angelic and human natures

are separate and distinct, but this proves that to be a perfect man is not to be an angel, any more than the perfection of angelic nature implies that angels are divine and equal with Jehovah; for Jesus took *not the nature of angels*, but a different nature—the *nature of men*; not the imperfect human nature as we now possess it, but the *perfect* human nature. He became a man; not a depraved and nearly dead being such as men are now, but a man in the full vigour of perfection.

Again, Jesus must have been a perfect man else He could not have kept a perfect law, which is the full measure of a *perfect man's ability*. And He must have been a perfect man else He could not have given a ransom (a corresponding price—1 Tim. 2:6) for the forfeited life of the perfect man Adam; “For since by man came death, by *man* came also the resurrection of the dead.” (1 Cor. 15:21) Had He been in the least degree imperfect, it would have proved that He was under condemnation, and therefore He could not have been an acceptable sacrifice; neither could He have kept perfectly the law of God. A perfect man was tried, and failed, and was condemned; and only a perfect man could pay the *corresponding price* as the Redeemer.

Now we have the question fairly before us in another form, viz.: If Jesus in the flesh was a perfect man, as the Scriptures show, does it not prove that a perfect man is a human, fleshly being—not an angel, but a little lower than the angels? The logical conclusion is unmistakable; and in addition we have the inspired statement of the Psalmist (Psa. 8:5-8) and Paul's reference to it in Heb. 2:7,9.

Neither was Jesus a combination of the two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of two natures produces neither the one nor the other, but an imperfect, hybrid thing, which is obnoxious to the divine arrangement. When Jesus was in the flesh He was a perfect human being; previous to that time He was a perfect spiritual being; and since His resurrection He is a perfect spiritual being of the highest or divine order. It was not until the time of His consecration even unto death, as typified in His baptism—at thirty years of age (manhood, according to the Law, and therefore the right time to consecrate Himself as *a man*)—that He received the earnest of His inheritance of the divine nature. (Matt. 3:16,17). The human nature had to be *consecrated to death* before He could receive even the *pledge* of the divine nature. And not until that consecration was actually carried out and He had actually sacrificed the human nature, even unto death, did our Lord Jesus become a full partaker of the divine nature. After becoming a man He became obedient unto death, *wherefore*, God hath highly exalted

Him to the divine nature. (Phil. 2:8,9) If this Scripture is true, it follows that He was not exalted to the divine nature until the human nature was actually sacrificed—dead.

Thus we see that in Jesus there was no mixture of natures, but that twice He experienced a change of nature; first, from spiritual to human; afterward, from human to the highest order of spiritual nature, the divine; and in each case the one was given up for the other.

In this grand example of perfect humanity, which stood unblemished before the world until sacrificed for the world's redemption, we see the perfection from which our race fell in Adam, and to which it is to be restored. In becoming man's ransom, our Lord Jesus gave the *equivalent* for that which man lost; and therefore all mankind may receive again, through faith in Christ, and obedience to His requirements, not a spiritual, but a glorious, perfect *human* nature—"that which was lost."

While Jesus as a man was an illustration of perfect human nature, to which the mass of mankind will be restored, yet since His resurrection He is the illustration of the glorious divine nature which the overcoming Church will, at resurrection, share with Him.

Because the present age is devoted mainly to the development of this class which is offered a *change* of nature, and because the apostolic epistles are devoted to the instruction of this "little flock," (Luke 12:32) it should not be inferred that God's plans end with the completion of this chosen company. Nor, on the other hand, should we go to the opposite extreme, and suppose that the special promises of the divine nature, spiritual bodies, etc., made to these, are God's design for all mankind. To these are the "exceeding great and precious promises," (2 Pet. 1:4) over and above the other precious promises made to all mankind. To rightly divide the word of truth, we should observe that the Scriptures recognize the perfection of the divine nature in the "little flock," and the perfection of the human nature in the restored world, as two separate things.

We have no record of any being, either spiritual or human, ever having been changed from one nature to another, except the Son of God; and this was an exceptional case, for an exceptional purpose. When God made angels He doubtless intended them to remain angels forever, and so with men, each being perfect on his own plane. At least the Scriptures give no intimation of any different purpose. As in the inanimate creation there is a pleasing and almost endless variety, so in the living and intelligent

creation the same variety in perfection is possible. Every creature in its perfection is glorious; but, as Paul says, the glory of the celestial (heavenly) is one kind of glory, and the glory of the terrestrial (earthly) is another and a different glory.

Mortality and Immortality

We shall find their true significance in exact harmony with what we have learned from our comparison of Bible statements concerning human and spiritual beings, and earthly and heavenly promises. These words are usually given very uncertain meanings, and wrong ideas of their meanings produce erroneous views of subjects with which they stand connected, in general and in Scripture usage.

“*Mortality*” signifies a state or condition of liability to death; not a condition of death, but a condition in which death is a *possibility*.

“*Immortality*” signifies a state or condition *not liable to death*; not merely a condition of freedom from death, but a condition in which death is an *impossibility*.

The common but erroneous idea of mortality is, a state or condition in which death is unavoidable, while the common idea of the significance of immortality is more nearly correct.

The word *immortal* signifies *not mortal*; hence the very construction of the words indicates their true definitions. It is because of the prevalence of a wrong idea of the word mortal that so many are confused when trying to determine whether Adam was mortal or immortal before his transgression. They reason that if he had been immortal God would not have said, “In the day that you eat thereof you will surely die;” because it is impossible for an immortal being to die. This is a logical conclusion. On the other hand, say they, Had he been mortal, wherein could have consisted the threat or penalty of the statement, “You shall surely die,” since if mortal (according to their erroneous definition), he could not have avoided death anyhow?

The difficulty, it will be perceived, is in the false meaning given to the word mortality. Apply the correct definition, and all is clear. Adam was mortal—that is, in a condition in which death was a possibility. He had life in full and perfect measure, yet *not inherent life*. His was a life *sustained* by “every tree of the garden” save the one tree forbidden; and so long as he continued in obedience to and in harmony with his Maker, his life was secure—the sustaining elements would not be denied. So seen, Adam had

life; and death was entirely avoidable, yet he was in such a condition that death was possible—he was mortal.

The question arises, then, If Adam was mortal and on trial, was he on trial for immortality? The general answer would be, Yes. We answer, No. His trial was to see whether he was worthy or unworthy of a continuance of the life and blessings already possessed. Since it was nowhere promised that if obedient he would become immortal, we are bound to leave all such speculations out of the question. He was promised a *continuance of the blessings then enjoyed* so long as obedient, and threatened with the loss of all—death—if disobedient. It is the false idea of the meaning of the word *mortal* that leads people in general to conclude that all beings who do not die are immortal. In this class they therefore include our Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus, the angels and all mankind. This, however, is an error: the great mass of mankind saved from the fall, as well as the angels of heaven, will always be mortal; though in a condition of perfection and bliss, they will always be of that mortal nature which could suffer death, the wages of sin, if they would commit sin. The security of their existence will be conditioned, as it was with Adam, upon obedience to the all-wise God, whose justice, love and wisdom, and whose power to cause all things to work together for good to those who love and serve Him, will have been fully demonstrated by His dealings with sin in the present time.

Nowhere in the Scriptures is it stated that angels are immortal, nor that mankind restored will be immortal. On the contrary, immortality is ascribed only to the divine nature—originally to Jehovah only; subsequently to our Lord Jesus in His present highly exalted condition; and finally by promise to the Church, the body of Christ, when glorified with Him.—1 Tim. 6:16; John 5:26; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:53,54.

The proper recognition of the meaning of the terms mortal and immortal, and of their use in the Scriptures, destroys the very foundation of the doctrine of eternal torment. It is based upon the unscriptural theory that God created man immortal, that he cannot cease to exist, and that God cannot destroy him; hence the argument is that the incorrigible must live on somewhere and somehow, and the conclusion is that since they are out of harmony with God their eternity must be one of misery. But God's Word assures us that He has provided against such a perpetuation of sin and sinners: that man is mortal, and that the full penalty of wilful sin against full light and knowledge will not be a life in torment, but a second death. "The soul that sins shall die." (Ezek. 18:4 RSV)

The human race are God's children by creation—the work of His hands—and His plan with reference to them is clearly revealed in His Word. Paul says that the first man (who was a sample of what the race will be when perfect) was of the earth, earthy; and his posterity, with the exception of the Gospel Church, will in the resurrection still be earthy, human, adapted to the earth. (1 Cor. 15:38,44). David declares that man was made only a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory, honour, dominion, etc... (Psa. 8:4-8). And Peter, our Lord, and all the prophets since the world began, declare that the human race is to be restored to that glorious perfection, and is again to have dominion over earth, as its representative, Adam had.—Acts 3:19-21.

It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! “Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.”—Rev. 21:4.

And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was “made to be inhabited” by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them, as represented in the Edenic paradise, in which the representative man was at first placed. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briars, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but “then shall the earth [easily and naturally] yield her increase.” (Psa. 67:6) “The desert shall...blossom as the rose” (Isa. 35:1); the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing, and obedient servants; nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in Him. The restless desire for something new, that now prevails, is not a natural but an abnormal condition, due to our imperfection, and to our present unsatisfactory surroundings. It is not God-like restlessly to crave something new.

Most things are old to God; and He rejoices most in those things which are old and perfect. So will it be with man when restored to the image of God. The perfect man will not know or appreciate fully, and hence will not prefer, the glory of spiritual being, because of a different nature, just as fishes and birds, for the same reason, prefer and enjoy each their own nature and element most. Man will be so absorbed and enraptured with the glory that surrounds him on the human plane that he will have no aspiration to, nor preference for, another nature or other conditions than those possessed. A glance at the present experience of the Church will illustrate this. "How hardly," with what difficulty, shall those who are rich in this world's goods enter into the kingdom of God. The few good things possessed, even under the present reign of evil and death, so captivate the human nature that we need special help from God to keep our eye and purpose fixed on the spiritual promises.



Empathy

No doctor is a good doctor who has not been sick himself.

He best can pity who has felt the woe.

Patience is mindful of its own imperfections, and sympathetic with the imperfections and shortcomings of others.

He who cannot weep does not know how to still the tears of others.

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook

THE BIBLE'S SONG OF LOVE

Verse by verse through the Song of Songs Part 4a Chapter 5:2-5

All references RV unless otherwise stated

Perhaps it is significant that Part 3 did not close with the Bride at rest as was the case in Parts 1 and 2. Her closing words at the end of Part 3 were words of exhilaration and spiritual delight but they did not bring her into His rest. How often does that experience lead to a condition of complacency: and so whilst at the end of Parts 1 and 2 she slept, resting in Him, in the opening verse of part 4 she is found talking sleepily to herself.

5:2 “I WAS ASLEEP, BUT MY HEART WAKED.”

Here this happy, blessed season closes. We know no uninterrupted communion yet. By reason of the frailty of our nature, we cannot always stand upright...and it frequently happens that the great enemy makes his most successful attempts upon us immediately after seasons of peculiar enjoyment. It was thus with the Bride on this occasion...here just like the disciples who, the very night on which they had partaken of the Lord's supper and when they so especially ought to have been watching, were asleep.

She is no longer with Him or even seeking Him. She has relapsed into the contentment obtained from the knowledge *of* Him rather than from the rest that is found in close communion *with* Him.

Once more the theme of our Lord's second presence is revived for, as Paul puts it, “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night... Therefore let us not sleep...” (1 Thess. 5:1-8 KJV) This association of thoughts continues as she says “IT IS THE VOICE OF MY BELOVED THAT KNOCKETH, SAYING, OPEN TO ME, MY SISTER, MY LOVE, MY DOVE, MY UNDEFILED: FOR MY HEAD IS FILLED WITH DEW, MY LOCKS WITH THE DROPS OF THE NIGHT.” But her lapse is not without hope for “He has not ceased to be her Beloved, nor has she lost ability to recognise His voice and His knock. There is true affection for Him, but it has ceased to be an energetic motive... “I slept.” (*C.A.C.)

The words of this verse call to mind our Lord's words in Rev. 3:16-20 but in this setting. He is not “outside a great worldly profession like Laodicea, but He is seen out in the cold when His true lovers are very comfortable without His company.” (C.A.C.)

“Now God may have been very gracious to us, He may have conferred spiritual gifts and graces upon us, He may have led us into a path of separation, and given us the enjoyment of many privileges that are peculiar marks of His favour. He may have enabled us to serve the Lord faithfully and with blessing. And yet in all this, *Christ Himself* may not have the place that is due to Him... We may be wrapped up in what we have, and what we are, without realising that it is a subtle form of self-sufficiency...” But He would have us make “Himself the one object of our desire and delight.” (CAC)

There seems to be a particular application to the period of the Lord’s second presence—at the close of the Gospel Age (“the night is far spent”) and a solemn warning to those who have heard the “knock.” In Rev. 3:20 our Lord implies that it is possible to hear the knock yet fail to open the door to intimate personal fellowship and communion. How possible it is for the Lord’s people to secure themselves behind “walls” and to become self-satisfied in their appreciation of scriptural truth. Here we see a condition between sleeping and waking. She hears “the voice” and seems satisfied because her heart is awake and there is an awareness that “the Lord is at hand.”

What grace there is on His words. No rebuke as she awakes but a loving appeal that she shall open her heart to Him. He calls her “sister” because she is a child of God—He calls her “love” because she is betrothed to Him—He calls her “dove” because she is indwelt by the holy spirit—He calls her “undefiled” because she is cleansed from all unrighteousness but He has to remind her that He is out in the cold as far as her love is concerned.

When we have lapsed into spiritual self-sufficiency do we not tend to answer His pleas with excuses for not putting Him first in our lives? In these verses we can see a picture of such an occasion for the Bride has turned away from the energetic spiritual life, the evidence of which earned His praise. (v.4) She has lapsed into lethargy, behind doors which she closed and bolted—doors which she thought would shut out the defilements of the world but which in fact shut out the Lord. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16 KJV) This is our Lord’s guidance to us when we seek to take ourselves “out of the world” for our Lord only wishes us to show that we “are not of the world.” (John 17:15-16 KJV)

5:3 “I HAVE PUT OFF MY COAT;” she says “HOW SHALL I PUT

IT ON?”

In these words the Bride reveals that she has withdrawn from the service of her Lord and lapsed into spiritual complacency. We have confirmation of this understanding from the fact that almost every other use of this Hebrew word “coat” in the Old Testament refers to the High Priest’s garment, without which the High Priest was unable to perform his priestly service.

Then the Bride goes on to say “I HAVE WASHED MY FEET; HOW SHALL I DEFILE THEM?”

True believers “soil their feet” symbolically because the feet are the part of the body which comes in contact with the earth.

“By my own works,” she seems to say “I have bathed my feet—surely I must not defile them again by earthly contacts with those who have not merited the privilege of sitting with Him in heavenly places.”

Jesus said to His disciples “He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet.” (John 13:10) So we may realise that all who are justified and consecrated members of His body have already had the bath, the washing of regeneration, and we are already clean through the word spoken unto them. (John 15:3) Nevertheless, although thus cleansed and sanctified, so long as we are in contact with the world we are liable to a certain degree of earthly defilements.

In chapter 4 verse 12 (KJV) she is described as “a garden inclosed”—His garden, for God enclosed her—sanctified or set her apart so that she might produce fruit. Now, however, she is in a new type of enclosure of her own making, not for the development of graces of the spirit but for sleep. Spiritual pride and complacency are here shown to shut out the Lord.

How easy it is after enjoying the rich pleasure of intimacy with Christ to want to feed on the delight itself without recognising that it was reached through spiritual activity. How easy to close a door in our spiritual life to those other believers who have not yet reached that blissful stage in their spiritual development, and how possible to be occupied with Christian affairs whilst the Lord is outside the bolted door of our hearts.

Does this not warn us that complacency and exclusiveness are special dangers to those who, like the Bride, are spiritually mature? If, in a desire

to preserve the sanctity of our new life, we isolate ourselves from those who are still out in the dark night, we shall find ourselves separated from Him also. Our Lord revealed the divine purpose for us when He prayed to the Heavenly Father “not that thou shouldest take them *out* of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15 KJV)

5:4 But our Lord has compassion on us because of our weakness. His patience is longsuffering and so He sees the stirring of her conscience even in her excuses. The Bride still has the sleep in her eyes as she continues “MY BELOVED PUT IN HIS HAND BY THE HOLE OF THE DOOR, AND MY HEART WAS MOVED FOR HIM.”

Commentators, acquainted with the customs of the East, explain that “Oriental houses are still made with a hole in the door, or rather, door post, by which the master and domestics open the locks by putting in their hand, while strangers neither dare nor know how to do so, the locks being variously made: at night additional bolts and bars fasten the door so that it cannot be opened from without.” (Weiss) “The finger inserted into the hole could move the bolt and open the door; at night a pin was passed before the forepart of the bolt to prevent...being opened on the outside.” (De Rio)

NOTICES

BIBLE STUDENTS SEMINAR DAY
Saturday 26 March 2022
West Haddon Village Hall, Near Rugby, NN6 7AN

For 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

International Convention of Bible Students
 Zawoja, Poland 15-19 August 2022

Gone from us
 Joan Hardwicke (Yeovil)
 Peggy Harris (Yeovil)
 Hazel Moore (U.S.A., formerly Aldersbrook)

In verse 2 we are told that the setting is in “the night” and thus we see that the closing and bolting of the door was definite and deliberate although she did not intend to shut Him out.

There are times in Christian experience when the fervency of “first love” has cooled and a condition of sleepiness has overcome the heart. Then oftentimes there is a manifestation of the Lord’s love for His own—He does not reveal Himself in the intimacy of former days but His constant love is manifested during some “night-time” experience—He puts in His “hand by the hole of the door” and our love is reawakened and our hearts are moved for Him.

5:5 The Bride responds to His persistent love, “I ROSE UP” she says “TO OPEN TO MY BELOVED; AND MY HANDS DROPPED WITH MYRRH, AND MY FINGERS WITH LIQUID MYRRH, UPON THE HANDLES OF THE BOLT.”

History tells of a custom that throws light upon this verse. In the East when a young woman had refused the addresses of her lover he visited her home during the night, hung garlands around the door and strewed the threshold with flowers. He also anointed the locks and handles of the door with choice perfumes. By this means he told the whole family that his affection, though slighted, was genuine.

We observe that the Beloved does not open the door Himself but stirs her into spiritual activity. It is as though she were experiencing the thought expressed by the Apostle Paul “Your having sorrowed with a godly sorrow—what earnestness it was called forth in you, what...longing affection...” (2 Cor. 7:11 Weymouth) for the child of God knows more of true happiness in seeking Jesus with many tears, than in idly keeping at a distance from Him.

True penitence is a sweet sorrow. Myrrh, bitter to the taste, is sweet to the smell. The myrrh mentioned here is the liquid form as used in the preparation of the holy anointing oil. (Exod. 30:23) Her hands dropped with myrrh for it was her anointed hands which drew the bolt of her heart when His suffering love had touched it.

EEA/LB