

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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



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

Bread is one of two things which are bought when people panic-buy at the shops here in Britain. Bread is one of the basic foodstuffs in many other countries such as in Egypt where according to Reuters about two-thirds of the population eat bread subsidized by the government to prevent starvation. During the 1970s in Egypt there were riots when the government tried to reduce food subsidies. It illustrates how essential bread is.

One early reference to bread in the Bible was when Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, brought Abraham out bread and wine. Melchizedek was going to bless Abraham whom God had delivered from his enemies. It does not seem that it was bread to eat for daily sustenance but as a solemn ceremony. (Gen. 14:18)

Isaiah seems to combine these two thoughts in Isa. 33:16. Israel had their enemies and there were threats of subservience and invasion. But the promise was that their bread would be sure. God would care for them when they trusted in Him and looked to Him for help; to trust and believe in Him and his promises as Abraham did in his day.

In Exodus God delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. In chapter 12 before the last of the ten plagues they were told to prepare a Passover lamb on the afternoon of the 14th of the month of Nisan. But also to eat unleavened bread with that meal. Bread, unleavened bread, was part of the meal they were to eat in haste. One can imagine the Hebrews, probably Hebrew women preparing the bread. The firstborn of the house were saved

from death so long as the blood was on the doorposts. That Passover they were then to keep every year as a memorial. It would be forty years before Israel would keep the Passover in the promised land of Israel of our day.

At the Last Supper a new memorial was instituted by our Lord Jesus when he *“took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.”* (Matt. 26:26) It is now this season of the year.

The apostle Paul clearly talks about the churches keeping that annual memorial of the Lord Jesus’ death as the Passover lamb. The surroundings in cities like Corinth were quite different to those in Israel. The people there had been involved with pagan worship mainly the Greco-Roman gods prior to the gospel reaching them. Some were still being involved in pagan ceremonies as well as the bread and wine in memorial of Jesus’ death. Paul was stressing the importance of this memorial and its broader application when he said, *“The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”* (1 Cor. 10:16-17) For they as a group were part of one loaf of bread. Mixing this with pagan worship was ruining the import of this solemn event, especially if they wished to be part of the body of Christ in heaven.

Paul at two other times reminds the brethren in ancient Corinth to examine their hearts and minds before partaking of the emblems of the bread and wine when one should have our Lord Jesus in our minds. (1 Cor. 5:8; 1 Cor. 11:27-29)

This unleavened bread would have been simple and fairly quick to prepare. The recipes would be just flour and water. The dough would be placed in an oven for baking.

Barley was used to make the unleavened bread. The Passover coincided with the first harvest of the year in Israel which was the barley harvest. The wheat harvest came weeks later. Barley was cheaper than wheat and therefore used by the humble everyday folk. Jesus humbled himself on the cross as a ransom for the whole world to balance out the sin of the first man, Adam.

YOUR BREAD & WATER SHALL BE SURE

The thirty-third chapter of Isaiah was called forth at a time when outward circumstances were very similar to the condition of Europe today. Isaiah's people, Israel, dwelt in shuddering fear of their greatest scourge, the hosts of Assyria under the leadership of Sennacherib. A gifted leader to his own people and one who did much for their benefit in the building of cities and vast irrigation works, he was nevertheless a ruthless and merciless conqueror to those whom he counted his enemies or fit subjects for plunder. The eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Second Kings and thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of Isaiah describe in detail his Palestine campaigns, and now in the time when this thirty-third chapter opens the children of Israel, having unwisely entered into a treaty with Egypt upon which they had relied for protection, were awaiting in terror the coming of their dreaded foe.

But Isaiah is not at this moment concerned with the possible fortunes of war. In point of fact the story ended happily for Israel, for after desolating the Judean countryside and setting his armies to besiege Jerusalem, Sennacherib suffered that mysterious destruction recorded in 2 Kings 19 which wiped out the invading host in one night and delivered Israel from the oppressor.

The theme upon which Isaiah is dwelling in the chapter now under consideration is the attitude to be adopted by those who had put their trust in God, who had not gone "down to Egypt for help" (Isa. 31:1) nor relied upon carnal weapons and the arm of flesh to be their protection, but had looked up to the God of Heaven who promised that while they trusted him He would ever be their defence.

So in Isa. 33:14 Isaiah cries a challenge. "*The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites (Heb. chaneph—profane). Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*" A heart-searching question indeed, for who, seeing the rapid sweep of the devouring Assyrian host across their fair land, could hope to abide in peace when all their world was being swept away and consumed before their very eyes? Isaiah answers his own question. "*He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.*" (v.15) These are they who, though caught up in the tide of battle and perchance suffering as would all men, are yet enabled to rise

above the tribulations of the moment because they have embraced the standards of another world and put their trust in One Who is more powerful than all this world's armies. Therefore it is that although still subject to the trials and tribulations of the flesh, these are promised that they "*shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions (strongholds) of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.*" (Isa. 33:16)

Precious promise, the inheritance of all who in every age have put their trust in their God when the wrath of man had raged against them. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. (Eph. 2:6) Constant is the exhortation to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor. 4:18) "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1) In that hallowed sanctum of the Rock of Ages shall he find sustenance, the bread of life and the water of life indeed. "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God," said Jesus "and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33) At a time when the advent of abnormal conditions of life amongst us threatens in so many cases the loss of a normal livelihood, good it is to remember the Divine promise "Bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure." (Isa. 33:16)

Now comes a word of assurance. In the midst of this troubled time let the believer but trust in his God and rest secure in that confidence, and (v.17) "*Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.*" Critical scholars render the latter phrase "the land of far distances." Who is there amongst us whose heart does not thrill at the prospect of even now, by faith, seeing our King in his beauty; "*the chiefest among ten thousand...he is (the one) altogether lovely*"? (Song of Solomon 5:10,16), and gazing entranced at the glorious vision of the land of tomorrow, a good land, a spacious land, one stretching into all eternity, truly "the land of far distances?" It is only when the thoughts are turned to the eternal promises of God and the heart relies fully upon him that this glorious prospect of future Ages, both for the Church and the world, can be seen stretching into the illimitable future. Why focus our eyes and thoughts upon the black clouds of trouble to the exclusion of that fair land which awaits all men on the other side?

Now in verse 18 the prophet turns for a moment from his lofty station and brings his thoughts back to the present. "*Thine heart shall meditate terror*" he says, or more correctly "Thine heart shall muse on the past terrors." Most translators agree that this is the true sense of the Hebrew.

The believer in God, after having firmly established his faith in the unseen things and in the promises of God, looks around him as it were, and asks “*Where is the scribe? Where is the receiver? Where is he that counted the towers?*” (v.18) The “scribe” was an Assyrian official accompanying the conquering armies whose duty it was to decide the nature and amount of tribute to be paid by each conquered village or community. The “receiver” (more properly “weigher”) was a companion official who received the tribute as it was paid, whilst in the “counter of towers” the reference is to a military officer who surveyed the countryside as hostilities proceeded and laid plans for the capture of villages and the siege of walled towns. Still in the land, still executing their dread work, but for the faithful child of God they are shorn of their terrors. Fresh from the vision of Divine overruling power he looks around and asks “where are they? What power have these man-made forces in face of the protecting care of my God?”

Clear from heaven the answer comes, as in Leeser’s vivid rendering of verse 19 “*The barbarous people shalt thou not see any more, the people of a speech too obscure to be understood, of a stammering tongue, without meaning.*” To the Hebrews the Assyrians were barbarians, a people notorious for their ruthlessness and cruelty, men of a foreign and unintelligible speech. But here they were in the land of Israel, ravaging its gardens and vineyards and destroying its villages and towns. How then could it be said “the barbarous people shalt thou not see any more?” What use uttering such words when the sad fact was only too obvious to those who looked on things around them. Ah, therein lay the answer. “We look” says Paul, “not at (on) the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” (2 Cor. 4:18) So with us, if in the midst of our troubles and perplexities we fix our gaze upon the unseen things of the Spirit, and our hopes upon the promises of God, the glorious vision of “things to come” will blot out the fear and terror of present distresses from our minds, leaving us in calm and undisturbed possession of that peace which passeth all understanding, that peace which converts the wildest storm into the calm of a placid lake, which takes full account of all that the wrath of man can do and finds it of no account in comparison with the overruling power of God. That is why Isaiah, in a fine flight of prophetic vision, exhorted his fellows to turn away from the contemplation of present troubles. “*Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.*” (v.20) Here is a picture of the New Jerusalem, the city of God which shall indeed fulfil the meaning of the archaic name. *Urusalim*, the

City of Peace. The old Tabernacle in the wilderness was often taken down and moved from place to place. In very truth the children of Israel had here no abiding place, and no continuing city. Time and oft their enemies destroyed and defiled their sanctuaries and in all its forty-odd centuries of history that city set in the tops of the Judean hills has never been a city of peace. Yet the time is to come when both literally and spiritually Jerusalem shall speak peace to the nations, and many people shall go up unto its walls to learn of the law of the Lord. (Isa. 2:3) A tabernacle that is at last a permanent dwelling place for the Lord God of Hosts; a sanctuary whose posts and cords shall not be removed any more for ever. *“But there”* cries the prophet exultantly (v.21) *“the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.”*

It is said that the 46th and 48th Psalms were composed at this time of national stress, and how fitly they mirrored the situation is proven by the constant appeal to those same Psalms when, as at the present time, the storm clouds of trouble loom more darkly and threateningly than is usual. But there is one great difference between the rivers of the city of God and those streams which Isaiah had in mind. “No galley with oars,” “gallant ship shall not pass.” What is the meaning of such seemingly out of place allusions?

The prophet was thinking of the rivers and canals (mistranslated “streams”) which were in that day such a feature of their enemy’s country. Mesopotamia* is today largely a desert—but that is only because the gigantic irrigation system which had been constructed and maintained from earliest times was destroyed and laid waste in the early centuries of this Christian era. The land is flat, and the two great rivers—Tigris and Euphrates—bring down great quantities of water which at certain seasons of the year overflow the banks and turn the whole countryside into a vast inland sea. At other times the rivers are shrunken and the land is dried and parched by the heat of the tropical sun. In the days of Sennacherib these flood waters were controlled by a marvellous system of canals, dams, and reservoirs which stored the water and made it available all the year round, in consequence of which the entire land was covered with wheat fields and fruit trees—almost a Paradise on earth. To dwellers in the mountainous country of Judah such a land of “broad rivers and canals” was a most fitting example of the earthly prosperity promised to the faithful of God, and hence the force of the promise that the Lord himself should be to them a “place of broad rivers and canals.”

*Modern-day Iraq

Now with Assyria in the height of her glory and power it was inevitable that the two great rivers should play their part in the conduct of military operations. Through the peaceful countryside ever and anon the war-vessels of the Assyrians came ploughing their way along the waters—galleyes rowed by slaves or larger ships with sails. The expression “gallant ship” is from a Hebrew word which is applied in the Scriptures to war-vessels rather than merchant ships, being used in this connection in Num. 24:24, Ezek. 30:9 and Dan. 11:30, in each of which cases war vessels are referred to. It was almost at the time when Isaiah penned these words that Sennacherib, desiring to consolidate his power to the south of his dominions, built a great war fleet at Nineveh, sailed down the River Tigris to a point where it flowed near the canal system of the Euphrates, along the great Babylonian canals into the Euphrates and down that river to the Persian Gulf, from whence he successfully attacked the Elamites and eventually returned to Nineveh. The news of these naval operations would reach the ears of the Israelites and cause them to reflect that whilst vessels of war sailed the rivers of Babylon those smiling fields and sparkling waters could know no true peace. Hence the force of the promise which declared that no warships or galleyes would ever sail on the rivers of the city of God. To us in this day comes the same cheering reflection. The instruments of the wrath of man will perish with the downfall of man’s power—they will find no place in the coming kingdom of righteousness.

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us.” (v.22)

There is the answer of supreme faith. We are the servants of the Most High God, the “high and lofty One that (who) inhabiteth eternity.” (Isa. 57:15) We have devoted ourselves and our lives to his glad service. We are his ambassadors, his representatives to a world in which we move as aliens; for it is true that “here have we no continuing city.” (Heb. 13:14) Surely then we can have confidence that whatever betides us is known to him and in fullest harmony with his Will. When the three Hebrew men were threatened with the fiery furnace they made this stirring reply to the Babylonian monarch “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...But if not, (if He does not so deliver) be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” (Dan. 3:17-18) The young man with Elisha was terrified at the apparent certainty of death at the hands of the Syrian armies, but when Elisha prayed and the young man’s eyes were opened he beheld the hosts of the Lord—horsemen of fire and chariots of fire—encompassing them in the mountains round about. So it is with us. The invisible legions of

God are fully able to divert from us all the dangers and distresses which it is not his will should come our way, and as for the rest, as for those disasters and trials which *are* permitted to come, shall we not say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” (Job 13:15)

Let our consideration of this eloquent passage in Isaiah’s prophecy be a source of strength and comfort in the coming days. Though darkness encompass the land and fears be on every side, though there be the terror that flieth by night and the arrow that flieth by day, the pestilence walking in darkness and destruction wasting at noonday (Psa. 91:5-9) let it always be true of us that “I have made the Lord my refuge, the Most High my habitation” and so doing, we shall not be greatly moved.

AOH
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Baking and Cooking

The grain was freshly ground each day in a hand mill consisting of two round flat stones (Deut. 24:6), or pounded into meal with mortar and pestle.

Baking was one of the women’s household tasks and when Samuel forecast the consequences of Israel having a king to reign over them he included the warning that “he will take your daughters to be...bakers.” (1 Sam. 8:13)

Most bread was leavened but unleavened bread was prepared and cooked not only for ceremonial purposes as a symbol of purity, but also when there was not sufficient time to be able to wait for the dough to rise. (See Exodus 12:34) “Ye shall burn no leaven...as an offering made by fire unto the LORD.” (Lev. 2:11 RV) but leavened bread as an offering was specified when it was eaten by the priests. (Lev 23:17,20) When menfolk were on a military campaign or long travels they would prepare unleavened bread. Gideon, for example, “made ready...unleavened cakes” for the angel. (Judges 6:19 RV) These would be baked in a depression in the soil from which the hot ashes of the fire had been raked. Ovens used at home were earthenware and almost conical in shape. They were placed over a fire which “the baker...ceaseth to stir...from the kneading of the dough until it be leavened.” (Hosea 7:4 RV) Thus when the inside had become hot and the fire was no longer smoking the flat batches of dough were slapped on to the inner sides to cook. Lighting a fire was a slow job so there was a practice of taking fire embers from one hearth to another. (Isa. 30:14).

They Lived in Israel
Laurence Bunker



We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the fountain head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

Bible Students Hymnal,
192

“HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON”

Of all sacred Scripture, there is none more familiar nor more beloved than John 3:16. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Simply believe, we are told, and our faith in Jesus Christ will save us. Certainly, no Christian will deny this, though some groups may point out and stress additional requirements. It is not the purpose here to discuss additional requirements, but rather to consider the *free gift* and how we are saved by faith. Perhaps the matter is so simple that it does not merit consideration. There are so many perplexing problems; should we not devote available time and energy to the more complex? Paradoxically the simplest problems are often the most difficult to understand. Comprehension of basic truths is usually essential to understanding of higher concepts. Thus it is impossible to master algebra or trigonometry until we understand addition and multiplication.

“Believe and thou shalt be saved.” Believe what? Can faith in God the Father save us? How can the death of One save billions? If He saved us by His Son’s death, then why must we believe? Do we need to be saved?

In his sinless state Adam had no need of a Saviour. Father Adam was in a heart and mind condition in which it was possible to live sinlessly. In fact, until the fatal transgression, he did live sinlessly. It may have been only months after he was created, or it might have been several years; we have no record, but he did live without sin. But when Adam disobeyed, an incomprehensible change came over him. From that moment on it was impossible to live sinlessly. He was lost; he was in a dying condition. His state, in so far as any effort on his part was concerned, was hopeless; he was condemned.

Why could not Adam by willpower, by works and effort, overcome his tendency to sin, live down his condition and come out from under condemnation? True, many leading denominations teach this very thing. We see the glory of God, they say, through the eye of faith, and through the wonders of creation. The goodness of it, the splendour, the selfless life, and death of Jesus of Nazareth, draw us to emulation. Through an unparalleled example, they say, we are inspired to do our best, magnify our willpower and effort, and in time come to live a nearly perfect life. Thus, many teach, we are saved. Likewise, non-Christian faiths use the

same method—emulation of great historical leaders.

The true Christian faith, however, first recognises Adam’s total inability to save himself through any effort or willpower of his own. No matter how great, no man can save himself; no man can save his brother. In so far as the sacred record reveals, there is but one way out of Adam’s dilemma, his condemnation. He has nothing with which to pay his debt. So God the Father, in his great love and mercy provided a way. “*He gave his only begotten Son.*” Jesus was “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” (Rev. 13:8) In short, Jesus took Adam’s place. Jesus died instead of Adam, thus setting Adam free, thus paying the penalty in full. He “*gave himself a RANSOM for all.*” (1 Tim. 2:6)

When Adam sinned, he carried the whole human race in his body in a representative sense. When he was condemned, the whole race was condemned, though still unborn. When a human reproductive cell divides off from the parent cell to start a new life, each cell is part of the original sinful, condemned organism. The new life is therefore under condemnation at the moment of conception. 1 Cor. 15:22 “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*” Rom. 5:12 “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” Note especially that “all have sinned.” All, that is, who live to see the light of day and reach any significant age. They sin because of an inherited nature. They cannot help sinning. There are no exceptions!

Rom. 5:12 is worthy of another close look. The expression “*death passed upon all men*” is significant. Death passes, not at age 21 or as a child or even at birth, it is inherited! It passes at conception, at the union of male and female cells to form a new life. It is primarily the result of the sins of the individual. Witness the fact that many infants die prior to birth, before there is any possibility of personal sins, *and yet they die!* True, all who do live sin personally, which sin is added to the original sin, but each individual is fully, completely and hopelessly lost even before birth, had Christ not come.

Jesus is especially clear in his statements of this truth. John 3:18 “*He that believeth on him (Jesus) is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*” And again in 3:36 “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*” And John 3:3. “*Except a man be*

born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Believe and thou shalt be saved! We are now in a position to consider the question: believe in what? What must we believe in to be saved? Will believing in itself and works save us? Will believing in the law, the prophets, the great religious leaders? Will believing in Jehovah God, without Christ, save us? First, we must recognise our inherited condemnation and our personal sinfulness. Then we must recognise that Jesus died to take our place. “Who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6), a redemptive price—the ransom. In connection with kidnappings, the term “ransom” is commonplace. It is the price paid for the one abducted. Jesus, in our place, himself served as the redemptive price, the ransom. “Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:28) “Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14)

That all humans regardless of age, colour, education, abode on the earth, historical era or other factors are condemned, and need a saviour, a ransom, is aptly proven by the following: 2 Cor. 5:14 *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, THEN WERE ALL DEAD.”* Could anything be clearer? All were in God’s sight dead, condemned to death. So Christ died for all. ALL! He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Heb. 2:9. *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* 1 Pet. 2:24. *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye (we) were healed.”* We must then first realise that we are lost and that Christ redeemed us from all iniquity, gave himself a ransom for each of us personally, all of us. This then, is the faith that saves us! *“Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price.”* (1 Cor. 6:19-20 RV) It is faith in the One who gave himself to save us—Jesus of Nazareth, the only begotten Son.

But did not our Heavenly Father give his Son as our ransom? Could not faith in the Father, apart from Jesus, save us also? Was not his sacrifice of love as great, his suffering as great, as that of Jesus? Did not He redeem us with the gift of his Son? Perhaps to our finite human minds this would seem a reasonable assertion. However we have the unqualified statement found in Acts 4:12 to the contrary. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* There is but one name given. Jesus Christ is

the one who died for us—who took our place. He it was who paid our debt. His is the only name in which our faith can save us.

How can the death of one man pay the penalty for millions? No one has any approximation of the number of humans who have been conceived since Adam's creation. Some estimate it at twenty to forty thousand millions. Someone recently as much as seventy-seven thousand millions. How can One vicariously take the place of many millions? When Adam transgressed, he brought condemnation on the whole race, then within his body, though yet unformed though they numbered many millions. In the same way, when Jesus died and redeemed Adam, He redeemed the whole race along with Adam just as though they were yet unborn. "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*" (1 Cor. 15:22) This does not mean that all will be saved; merely that all will come up out of their graves. "*All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.*" (John 5:28-29)

"So then as through one trespass the (Adamic) judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the FREE GIFT came unto all men to justification of life." (Rom. 5:18 RV) In short, when Adam sinned, and the whole race with him, we personally died. When Jesus died in Adam's stead, He redeemed not only Adam but the whole race. He redeemed us personally.

Now where does faith enter in? If Christ saved us at Calvary roughly two thousand years ago why do we need to believe? How can faith save us?

Though Christ died for us nearly two thousand years ago, and paid our penalty, both for inherited sinfulness and our own transgressions and omissions, we must still hear and believe. He paid it all, but until we hear and believe we are not free we are still in our sins. The reason the Bible can truthfully state: "*There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*", (Acts 4:12) is now discernible. Jesus died to save us. But only hearing and believing can make it effectual. Did Confucius die for us? Could he, himself a sinful man, have paid the full price? Could Mohammed? Could any but the sinless Son of God?

There is a popular teaching abroad today that the doctrine of the ransom is outmoded, that it has been superseded by "more modern theories of the atonement." Unfortunately, this is too true in some quarters. But not in God's word. In holy writ man is *more in need of a Saviour today than ever!* More in need of a Redeemer! These are perilous times, of seducing

spirits, of gross darkness. The Greek words *antilutron*—ransom, and *lutron*—also rendered ransom, unlike many Greek words, have but one meaning. That is “Ransom,” a redemptive price. In addition the word redeem, in its several forms, is used twenty times in the New Testament alone. To deny the ransom, that we were in need of redemption, that Christ redeemed us with his precious blood is no less than to deny the Christian faith! True, it is but the first step in the process of atonement. But redemption is the very foundation of Christianity. Without it we are, without exception, in this age or any age *lost*; hopeless, perishing in our sins.

Great as it is, the priceless gift bringing salvation by faith in that gift, does not constitute all of the Gospel. Rather it is the stepping stone to the high and heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus. To those who hear and heed goes the promise of sonship, participation in the Divine nature, heirship of God and joint heirship with Christ, to be seated with him in his throne, and to live and reign with him a thousand years. The saints will judge both men and angels. The mind of man is utterly unable to comprehend the glory and honour which God has in store for his own.

March / April 1984

PERFUME VERY PRECIOUS

Those who bring the alabaster boxes of perfume of praise and thankfulness generally have little to ask. Rather they realise that they are already debtors to such an extent that they can never show properly their appreciation of Divine favour. Properly they recognise that day by day they are receiving at the Lord’s hands exceedingly and abundantly more than they could ask or wish, and that in the spiritual blessings alone they have what satisfies their longings as nothing else can do. Such more nearly follow the course of Mary and bring alabaster boxes of perfume to the Lord—their prayers and thanksgiving of heart; and asking nothing, but giving thanks for all things, they receive from the Master such all outpouring of blessing that they are not able to contain it.

Those who view the matter rightly must certainly feel that none of us have anything worthy to present to our Lord—that our very best, our most costly gifts or sacrifices, are not worthy of Him and but feebly express the real sentiments of our hearts. How glad we are if our humble efforts are accepted of the Lord, and how we hope that ultimately we shall hear the same sweet voice saying of us, “He hath done what he could,” “She hath done what she could.”

March 1944

DANIEL IN BABYLON

14. The Seventy Weeks

The Persian conquest of Babylon made very little difference to the normal life of the city. The comparative ease with which the capital had fallen, with little destruction or loss of life, meant that the citizens merely exchanged a Babylonian ruler for a Persian, Cyrus. The commercial life of the city went on as usual; merchant vessels from Africa and India still came up the river to the quays of Babylon; caravans of goods still traversed the high roads from Syria and Egypt. The government was in the hands of the Persians, but the life of the nation went on much as before. It was not at the capture of Babylon by Cyrus that the vivid prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah relating to the doom of the wicked city had their fulfilment, but twenty years later, when Darius Hystaspes the Persian king laid siege again to the city and demolished its walls. In the meantime Daniel was faced with the situation that the power of Babylon was broken, apparently for ever; Cyrus the Persian was quite evidently the coming man, and Cyrus was the name of the man in Isaiah's prophecy who should let the captives restore the worship of God at Jerusalem. Small wonder that Daniel went to the sacred books to discern what he could of the purposes of God.

"In the first year of his reign (Darius) I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof (whereby) the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." (Dan. 9:2)

An old man of ninety sat reading, as he had read hundreds of times before, words that were penned when he was a lad of sixteen or so. His whole life had been lived in expectation of an event which, even as a boy, he knew could not come until he himself was ninety years of age; whatever may have been the hopes and beliefs of his fellows as to their deliverance, Daniel himself had known all along that he was destined to spend the rest of his life in Babylon. That Return from Exile which he so ardently desired for his people would not come until he himself would be too old to share in it.

Nearly seventy years previously, in the third year of Jehoiakim King of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem, made Jehoiakim tributary, taken the sacred vessels from the Temple and carried them, with Daniel and his fellows, into Babylon. In the following year, the Babylonian king broke the power of Egypt at Carchemish and thenceforth was the

undisputed master of Western Asia. In that year Jeremiah uttered the message against Judah recorded in his twenty-fifth chapter, and it is that message to which Daniel referred. The Divine sentence had gone forth against the guilty people; from that third year of Jehoiakim when they became tributary to Babylon and their Temple treasures went into an idol sanctuary, they were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jer. 25:11) At the end of the seventy years the power of Babylon was to be broken. Until then all nations were to serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his grandson, “*until the very time of his land come*” (Jer. 27:7) a prophecy which was fulfilled in a most remarkable way, for his son Evil-Merodach (Jer. 52:31) and his grandson Belshazzar both reigned and then the kingdom came to an end. Daniel, after the death of Belshazzar and the transfer of sovereignty to the Persians, realised that the time had expired.

What were his thoughts as his eyes scanned the familiar words and his mind went back to those days of long ago? Was there a measure of sadness that so few of his own generation remained to share his realisation of hopes fulfilled? Daniel must have been getting a rather lonely man. His old friend and mentor, Jeremiah, was of course long since gone to his rest, buried somewhere in Egypt. Of his three companions in exile, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, nothing is known since the incident of the fiery furnace, nearly forty-five years in the past. Quite likely they too were dead. Ezekiel the prophet and Jehoiachin the captive king were almost certainly at rest with their fathers. The up-and-coming young men who were marked out as leaders of the nation when the Return to Jerusalem could be effected were two generations later than his own. But there was no jealousy and no repining. Daniel knew he could have no part in the stirring days of the Return himself, but he knew that prayer was vitally necessary before that Return could become a reality and so he betook himself to earnest and urgent prayer on behalf of his beloved people. And the consequence of that prayer was the revelation of a time prophecy so obviously and accurately fulfilled that it set the seal upon Daniel’s book and stamped the study of time prophecy with Divine approval.

It is impossible to read Daniel’s ninth chapter without realising just how the saintly old man poured out his heart’s longings to God. Here are the hopes and dreams of a lifetime, the faith that knows God is faithful, the insight that perceives the only obstacle to be unbelief, the conviction that God will surely hear, and act, because He *is* God, and God cannot lie. What He has promised that He will surely perform. Every acknowledgement of God’s constancy and faithfulness is made, and with that a full and frank admission of Israel’s guilt. There is no evasion of the issue; Israel

reaped what she had sown; deserved what she had got. But because God is good, and because, with all their faults, Jerusalem and her people are called by God's name, Daniel besought his liege Lord to return, and relent, and execute his great purpose in delivering Jerusalem. "*We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.*" (Ch. 9:18) Could any of us in these favoured days of spiritual understanding come more closely to the true nature of Divine forgiveness? Could any one of us come any nearer to the heart of the Father? It was to that last heartfelt appeal the Father responded. Once more a heavenly being of high rank and greatly honoured in the courts of heaven was charged with a mission to earth. We know very little about conditions beyond the Veil, the everyday life of the celestial world, but that it is a place and condition of ceaseless activity is evident. Gabriel was no stranger to the world of man and he had visited Daniel before. If one asks the question whether there truly does exist an angelic personality bearing the name Gabriel, entrusted at times with Divine commissions to men, the answer can only be that the Bible gives us no ground for disputing the fact. This "seventy weeks" prophecy could only have been revealed from heaven; Daniel asserts that it was told him by a visitor he knew from former experience to be Gabriel, the messenger of God. Five hundred years later the same personality appeared to Mary the mother of Jesus, again with a message of great import, this time to announce the fulfilment of that which he had predicted to Daniel. Although Gabriel is not mentioned by name anywhere else in Bible history, it is very possible that he is the one concerned in other appearances of an angelic being to men—to the Apostle Peter in prison, perhaps, or to Paul when he was told he would be brought before Caesar.

"*Whiles I was speaking,*" in prayer, (v.20) Gabriel came. "*At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came (went) forth, and I am come to show thee*" (v.23) is the assurance of the heavenly visitor. So quickly may prayer be answered; so near to us is that celestial world where God's will is done as one day it will be done on earth. "*Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear*" says the Lord through Isaiah. (Isa. 65:24) Sin is a separating influence which puts God far away from us; prayer is a magnetism which brings us at once very near to God.

So the story of the seventy weeks was unfolded. "Weeks" is, as is usually well known, a mistranslation. The proper rendering is "seventy sevens" where "seven" is "*hepdomad,*" a unit, especially a unit of time. There is not much doubt that Daniel was to have his understanding of Jeremiah's

seventy years linked up with a greater seventy,—seventy sevens, in fact—leading up to the greater development of God’s Plan, which would, eventually, bring to fruition all Daniel’s hopes.

The seventy years of Jeremiah were literally fulfilled, several times over. The primary decree was that not only Judah, but the nations round about, were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years and then the power of Babylon would be broken. (Jer. 25:11-12) During that period the penalty for resistance to the Divine decree of subjection was conquest, destruction, desolation. True to the promise, from the third year of Jehoiakim when Judah passed under Babylonian domination to the Decree of Cyrus was seventy years. Likewise the period from the destruction of the Temple in the eleventh year of Zedekiah to the completion of Zerubabel’s Temple in the sixth year of Darius Hystapes was seventy years. Small wonder that Daniel, having lived through the first-named period, looked now for the restoration of Judah, and hence for Divine enlightenment as to the next development in the outworking of the Divine Plan.

“Seventy weeks (sevens) are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city” (Dan. 9:24) to accomplish seven different aspects of our Lord’s work at his First Advent. Gabriel recited them in order; while he recited, Daniel must have listened in growing awe as he realised that greater and still unplumbed depths of the Divine purposes were being revealed.

“To finish the transgression.” (v.24) Our Lord’s Advent was timed to come when Israel had filled up the measure of their fathers. (Matt. 23:32) The period between Daniel and Jesus brought Israel’s guilt up to the brim and abundantly demonstrated their unworthiness of the promise.

“To make an end of sins.” (v.24) Jesus did that by yielding his own life an offering for sin, a Ransom for All, to be testified in due time. (Isa. 53:10; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

“To make reconciliation for iniquity.” This is the atonement which Christ made, pictured in the Tabernacle ceremonies by offering the blood of the sin-offering on the “mercy seat” or propitiatory in the inner sanctuary, a “covering” for human sin.

“To bring in everlasting righteousness.” The Apostle Paul explained this when he spoke of justification by faith, the gift of God to all who accept Jesus as Saviour and trust in him alone for salvation and reconciliation with God.

“To seal up the vision and prophecy.” The more correct rendering is “vision and prophet” and the sealing is in the sense of ratifying. The Father himself ratified both the vision and the prophet who brought the vision, when He declared from Heaven at the time of Jesus baptism *“This is my beloved Son...hear ye him.”* (Matt. 17:5)

“To anoint the Most Holy.” This refers to the consecrated things of the temple, especially the altar of burnt-offerings, and can well apply to the final work of the First Advent when Jesus, glorified, anointed his disciples with the Holy Spirit of Power, sending them forth after Pentecost to commence their great work of witness.

Gabriel told Daniel (vv.25-27) that this great period of seventy sevens was to be divided into three sections of seven sevens, sixty-two sevens and one final seven. In that last seven great happenings were to transpire. Most momentous of all, Messiah would be cut off *“but not for himself.”* No, He died for others, for men, that they might live. In the middle of that “seven” Messiah would bring to an end the *“sacrifice and oblation,”* those literal offerings and sacrifices demanded by the law to give Israel a ritualistic righteousness. He made an end of that Law, nailing it to his cross. (Col. 2:14) Never again could those offerings have any validity in God’s sight, for the reality had come. Then Messiah was also to *“confirm the covenant with many for one week (seven).”* True to that word, the covenant of favour to Israel which precluded Gentiles from entering the *“High Calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3:14) was continued throughout three and a half years more until it came to an end with the acceptance of Cornelius, the first Gentile fellow-heir. Because of *“the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate”* even as Jesus declared, weeping over the city but declaring nevertheless *“your house is left unto you desolate.”* (Matt. 23:38) Then, finally, *“the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary”* (v.26) and that word was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Here is a clear outline of the light and shade, the glory, and the tragedy, of the First Advent. Daniel must have perceived that all this meant great distress for his people even though it also included the fulfilment at last of the Divine promise. Naturally enough, therefore, the question must have come to his lips as it did to the disciples of Jesus half a millennium later, “How long?”; “When shall these things be?”

Daniel realised at once that the seventy sevens were sevens of years. He was already aware of Jeremiah’s period of seventy years, now fulfilled,

but this was a greater period, *seventy sevens*. Four hundred and ninety years; that was the vista which now appeared before the prophet's wondering mind.

The starting point is given in terms of an easily recognisable political event. "*From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince....*" (v.25) were the angel's words. Daniel did not live to see that event. He did come to know of the decree issued by Cyrus king of Persia in the first year of his reign authorising whosoever would of the Jews in Babylon to return to Judea and rebuild the ruined Temple. Some forty-nine thousand returned under Zerubbabel but their initial enthusiasm soon waned and the work languished. The royal edict was reiterated sixteen years later in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, third successor of Cyrus. In consequence of the missionary zeal of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah at that time the work was resumed and in another four years the Temple was completed and dedicated. But the city around it was still desolate, its walls broken down and its gates just as they were left when Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers burned them with fire nearly a century previously. No authority or permission had as yet been given "*to restore and build Jerusalem.*" Next came the reign of Xerxes, and then his son and successor Artaxerxes I, who in the seventh year of his reign, some seventy years after the decree of Cyrus, sent Ezra the priest to take offerings and treasure for the rebuilt Temple and to govern the little Jewish colony, but even then no word or command or intimation regarding the rebuilding of the city and its walls.

Thirteen years later, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, a royal commission was awarded Nehemiah, the Jewish patriot, to proceed to Jerusalem for the express purpose of rebuilding the city, its houses, walls and gates. At this time Jerusalem was still in ruins; the impulse of Nehemiah to go there sprang from a report on its condition brought to him in this same year. Its walls were still broken down, its gates burned with fire and the houses not built. Here, it would seem, is the starting point of the prophetic period. Sixty-nine sevens from this point, four hundred and eighty-three years, to the appearance of Messiah, and one more seven for the completion of all that his Advent was to mean to Israel; this was the gist of Gabriel's intimation and Daniel knew then that the consummation of Israel's hopes was still very far away.

Looking back in history we ought to perceive very clearly the fulfilment of this time prophecy, for Messiah has come and we know when He came. It was in the autumn of A.D. 29 that Jesus of Nazareth stood by the waters

of Jordan to be baptised by John as a prelude to his ministry on earth. There, at that time, He became the Messiah the Prince. Three and a half years later “*in the midst of the seven*”—the last seven—He caused “*the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*” by his death on the cross. By the end of that seven the special standing before God which Israel had enjoyed since Sinai was abrogated, and the Gospel was extended to all nations. The seventy weeks had ended.

Unfortunately the starting-point cannot be located in history so precisely. The Persians did not produce any reliable historians of their own; the Greek historians of the time are confused and contradictory when it comes to Persian happenings. In consequence there is dispute as to the precise date of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes with a possible variation of sixteen years, 454-438 BC. Herodotus, Ctesias, Thucydides, Ptolemy and Josephus between them have set later historians, chronologists and commentators alike a problem which has occupied the thoughts and pens of many a writer during the latter part of the Age. But for the present purpose accuracy to a year is quite unnecessary. The important thing is that this “seventy weeks” back from the ministry of Jesus must in any case have commenced within ten years or so of whatever date eventually turns out to be that of Artaxerxes twentieth year. Ten years in five hundred is a quite close margin of error and as we look back upon this fulfilled prophecy, we can only marvel at its exactitude. Small wonder that modern critics decry the whole thing and endeavour to suggest other and earlier starting points for the prophecy so as to bring its termination in the days of the Maccabean revolt, assigning all these eloquent phrases to the petty doings of a lot of apostate High Priests and princes in Israel. We can only say “*This is the LORD’s doing: it is marvellous in our eyes.*” (Psa. 118:23)

The division, in verse 25, of the sixty-nine sevens into two periods of seven and sixty-two is not further elaborated on by the revealing angel. Seven sevens, forty-nine years, from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes must end at some time between 406-390 BC. This point of time is notable for a number of events momentous to Israel.

Darius II, son of Artaxerxes, died 405 BC. With his death the favour shown by successive Persian kings to Israel since the days of Cyrus came to an end. Upon the accession of Darius’ successor, Judea lost its status as a province and was added to the province of Syria; thus commenced the Syrian oppression of Israel which became so terrible an affliction a century or so later.

Nehemiah, the last governor of Judea, died probably between 413 and 405 BC, Ezra a little earlier.

Malachi, the Hebrew prophet, flourished during the last seven years of Nehemiah and died, it is estimated, very soon after the patriot's death.

The canon of the Old Testament was completed.

Thus, at the end of the first "seven sevens," the period of the Restoration, all the favour shown by the Persians to the Jews, all the rebuilding and re-establishment of the nation, all the fervency of the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and the reforming zeal of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, all that had been accomplished during that stirring time, came to an end. The nation entered upon a new and bitter experience which progressively worsened, with only occasional periods of intermission, until the conquest of Judea by Titus in A.D. 70, and the greater Dispersion among all nations began. Even that was foreseen by the heavenly visitant; "*the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*" he said (Dan. 9:26). That prediction was fulfilled to the letter.

Daniel must have had much to think about when his visitor had gone. The city of his fathers and the Temple, the glory of the city, were to be rebuilt only to be destroyed again. Would the Lord never fulfil his promise to plant Israel and not pluck them up again? Long and earnestly must the aged prophet have cogitated over the problem; the ways of God are often dark and mysterious, and men comprehend them not. But for Daniel there was more to come; he was yet to be given the final vision, which assured him that despite all these disasters all would be well at the last.

(To be continued)

AOH



THE JAM IS LOVING-KINDNESS

MOTHER asked her six-year-old what loving-kindness meant. "Well," he said, "when I ask you for a piece of bread and butter and you give it to me, that's kindness, but when you put jam on it, that's loving-kindness."

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook
A.C. Frey Collection

VERILY, VERILY

Part 2 of 2

Jesus' death

Jesus was preparing his followers especially his disciples for his death when saying *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”* (John 12:24) They probably did not understand at the time but later the Holy Spirit enabled them to recall his words. In farming crops grow from seeds which produce about 110 seeds per plant (in some figures for winter wheat.) Then one of those seeds can be kept to be planted to produce another, on average, 110 seeds. Therefore one seed turns into a plant which produces many more than itself. There was a purpose in Jesus' death—it would produce fruit. These are the first fruits. 3,000 were added on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:41) In the New Testament seven churches are listed in Turkey in Revelation 2 and 3, not forgetting Colossae, Miletus, as well as places over the Middle East like Caesarea and in Europe—Rome, Corinth, Philippi and Thessaloniki, Berea and islands like Crete, Cyprus, and Malta—an immediate fruitage. This has continued to our end of the age to all continents and islands. Truly the death of Jesus produced much.

Jesus was also preparing them for his death when he said *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”* (John 16:20) They were not aware of the suffering saviour referred to in Isa. 53 who would die as a sin offering. It was necessary for them to hear these words he was foretelling as they would be recounting them at a later date and for us today. Importantly their joy would be in Jesus' resurrection. This is our joy too.

The resurrection is the centre of the Christian message starting first with the resurrection of our Lord Jesus and then being rolled out in due time to cover all the world of humankind and this was his message when he said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (judgment,*

crisis).” (John 5:25-29) Truly this is a wonderful passage.

Verily negative

“*Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.*” (John 3:11 ESV) These are further words to Nicodemus who did not believe what Jesus said at that time and was not becoming a disciple. It seems Nicodemus did not believe *in* Jesus as the promised *Messiah* and son of God and it was beyond him to acknowledge that Jesus was God’s son. However, Nicodemus with Joseph of Arimathea did bury Jesus when it would probably have had negative consequences for them with the Sanhedrin so it is possible he became a believer and surely many in the kingdom will want to hear from Nicodemus if he is on earth rather than in heaven.

“*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*” (John 5:19) Clearly one point we can take from this is once again Jesus is the Son of God which was why he was able to do miracles. Though others did wonders and signs like Moses, Elisha (Shunammite’s son, 2 Kings 4) as well as Peter and Paul. With Lazarus the power of prayer enabled Lazarus to come forth. However it appears to be more in relation to the Father’s *will*, plans and purposes and that being the guiding light to Jesus’ movements and actions.

“*Verily, verily, I say to you — Every one who is committing sin, is a servant of the sin.*” (John 8:34 YLT) It is as Paul said that we would not, that we do although our intent is to be sinless. (Rom. 7) In John Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and knew they wanted to kill him. That was their sinful desire. Jesus was implying he was *the son of God* and not a temporary servant. He could make them free as the Son, (v.36) free from the law of sin and death. But that relied on them recognising Jesus as the son of his Father in heaven.

There is a well-known verse which is unusual because it was a very personal statement to Peter. It is found also in Matthew (26:34) and Mark (14:30). “*Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.*” (John 13:38) Peter was an apparent extrovert with a fervent belief in Jesus as Christ. The background although personal can be set in the context of *service and sacrifice* of the Church during this Christian era. Peter said he would lay down his life for Jesus. It is

recorded that he cut off the right ear of one of the band of men that had come with weapons to arrest Jesus. (John 18:10) Later Peter followed Jesus with another disciple to the door of the palace of the high priest. The lady at the door asked if he, Peter, was one of Jesus' disciples. Later when warming himself by a fire that night another man warming himself asked if Peter was one of Jesus' disciples? Then a servant of that High Priest, asked Peter if he was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. All three times he denied Jesus. At this time he only had a measure of the spirit and would not receive the Holy Spirit till Pentecost. It was a timely reminder it would be challenging to be a follower of Christ. After Pentecost the N.T. records the faith of those like Stephen, James, Paul, and Peter.

The final repeated declaration in John to Peter says, "*truly, truly...when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.*" (John 21:18 ESV) The KJV uses the word "gird" as it's like a belt it infers his movements would be controlled by others. Peter was arrested and put in prison. (Acts 4:3; Acts 12:1-4) It is recorded he was released both times according to God's will. Schofield suggests Peter wrote his second epistle about A.D. 66 so he may have died of old age. Peter's martyrdom is not recorded in the New Testament but tradition says he was put to death and there is no evidence to say that it was not so for Peter.

James was martyred. (Acts 12:2) Paul, and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi. After that Paul appears to have been in house arrest twice when deported to Rome as a Roman citizen although a Jew. In Paul's final epistle he says, "*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*" (2 Tim. 4:6) Paul's martyrdom is also not recorded in the New Testament. We do not have the references to confirm the manner of his death but our Lord Jesus' words in the closing chapter of John's gospel may suggest what would happen to those other than Peter when they were older. The last record we have of one of the twelve is John on the island of Patmos for his personal safety. It appears this true saying is about the end of Peter's ministry in *service* of his Lord and the church but could be indicative of others in the early church.

Then finally to Judas. Jesus was "*troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*" (John 13:21) It seems almost incomprehensible that one of his disciples would betray him and thus effect his death. But so it was and Jesus knew in such detail what would happen. Indeed Psalm 41:9 hints of a betrayal and the

price seems noted by Zechariah (11:12-13) and maybe these verses were on his mind. Jesus warned “*you will be betrayed even by parents, and brothers, relatives, and friends; and they will put some of you to death.*” (Luke 21:16 NKJV) In this case it was sad for the rejection of the Saviour who would die as a ransom for all. It’s a failure in service and sacrifice and Judas was not able to live with his betrayal and ended his life.

All these are precious declarations of our Lord and Saviour that he highlighted as important.

NAC

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THE GOLDEN FUTURE

Part 2 Into the darkness

CIVILISATION has come to the crossroads. The cataclysm of 1914 unleashed characteristics in human nature which men fondly imagined had been repressed for ever. Honesty in business, courtesy in politics, and morality in social life, all have suffered degeneration in the last decades—and the edifice of social ethics built up by the peoples of Western Europe and North America during three centuries is shaken and riven to its foundations. The nations which achieved greatness on the basis of an open Bible, religious toleration, and the emergence of true democratic principles of government, are now sliding into the abyss just as truly as they are rejecting those same foundations of their past standing. Europe's statesmen are at their wits end; every conference becomes abortive and every agreement a scrap of paper, and with each successive endeavour to stay the heading descent it becomes more apparent that the existing social order is doomed. Truly, as predicted by Jesus two thousand years ago, there is today "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity...men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth." (Luke 21:25-26)

The catastrophe is inevitable. There can be no other ending. Despite the pious hopes of the last few generations and the belief of many that civilisation never stood on a higher level, the whole foundation upon which human society has existed from the dawn of history has made such a climax certain. The world is built on selfishness. Sin and injustice are allowed to flourish measurably unchecked, and the constant endeavour of men to acquire power and possession at the expense of fellow-men has resulted in a condition upon earth aptly pictured in the oft-quoted saying:

*"Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn."* (Burns)

In the beginning the human race was endowed with full mental, moral and physical perfection. The story in Genesis is plain in its teaching. Our first parents were adapted to a material environment which could be made to afford them everything desirable for the necessities and amenities of human life. The Divine commission was to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish (fill) the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. 1:28) Man was intended to be the lord of this earthly creation, making use of all its products for his own pleasure and satisfaction, and living his life in perfect harmony with his Creator

and with his fellows. That is why man would have lived eternally in this sublime condition had he not deliberately and wilfully transgressed the Divine laws of creation and plunged himself and all his descendants into sin—and all the disease, suffering and death which sin entails.

Consequently today, although man has attained an almost complete mastery over the forces of Nature; although he can at the touch of a switch or screen converse with his neighbour halfway round the earth or view in his sitting-room scenes which are at that moment being enacted a hundred miles away; although he can set upon his table the fruits and products of lands in another hemisphere and be carried in comfort to those same lands hundreds of miles an hour; although he has thus conquered outward forces and subdued in the earth, he has not yet learned how to subdue himself. The canker of sin and selfishness in the heart vitiates (pollutes) those wonderful possibilities which are latent in human powers, and renders him impotent to achieve the one thing every man at heart really desires—everlasting life under conditions of ideal happiness.

Now humankind awaits the greatest cataclysm of all. The imminent collapse of the world economic system is foreseen by many. The complex nature of this vast structure built upon wrong principles has at length reached the point where all the endeavours of its sponsors are insufficient to avert irretrievable ruin. As the writer to the Hebrews so truly says in another connection: “That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13), and today the world waits with bated breath for that final catastrophe which spells the ultimate and utter failure of man’s attempt to govern the world—without God.

It is then that God will reach down from Heaven to save. He who has, for long ages, led men through a dark and devious way that they may learn well the laws which must govern their future well-being, will listen to that cry which will ascend from a stricken race. It is then that Peter’s confident prophecy uttered on the Day of Pentecost to the wondering crowds in Jerusalem will have its glorious fulfilment.

“He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20-21)

For it is in the promised coming of Jesus Christ to restore order out of confusion that men will, at last, see the light.

SOWING

A word of exhortation

“He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.” (Eccl. 11:4).

These words may be summed up as unnecessary caution. It describes the position of one who fears to act lest...; something is holding him back; he notes the wind and postpones the sowing until a more favourable day; he beholds the clouds and defers the reaping. Several ways of applying the teaching come readily to the mind. We may think of one who knows somewhat of the purposes of God, he realises his great debt to God and Christ for the work of salvation unmerited and free. He feels that his gratitude for all should show itself in more than verbal thanks. He has come to that point which we refer to as Rom. 12:1. He knows that the Christian way is no easy road, and he hesitates. Observing the winds he fails to sow. In such a position of mind the winds may well increase and storm clouds gather. He may think within himself: “I must think this over more,” but in reality he fears to “touch things which involve so much.” Maybe he believes he is counting the cost, but in fact he is merely counting the debits and omitting the credits. He feels the winds and sees the gathering clouds, but has forgotten the sunshine. He is thinking of the risks, and the result of his supposed counting-the-cost is only miscalculation. (We cannot, in fact, count the cost, for much more is involved in the life of consecration than we ever supposed as we commenced the pathway. All will now agree that the cost as it works out in our lives is far different from what we supposed or expected). He is forgetting the important fact that whereas there will be storms, the providences of God are greater than the storms. God has not promised that there will be no storm or wind, but He has promised abundant blessing. Whatever he thinks within his heart, he should yield himself to God and get on with the sowing. He will meet winds he never thought of, receive providences he would not have dreamed of when first he knew the Lord and will reap more than he anticipated. We recall that to Israel God promised fruitful fields so that they could safely sow and reap. He did not promise no storm or wind, but He promised bountiful crops, and the providences of God provided the increase.

One of our best-known parables commences: “*A sower went forth to sow.*” (Matt. 13:3) Had our Lord observed the winds He would not have scattered the seed which was to yield one hundred and forty-four thousand. No sower of the word encountered more storms than He. Had

He hesitated or counted the cost we should not be where we are today. Nor did He reason in the words of his own parable that some of the seed would fall by the wayside, and some among thorns. Nor did He regard that a cloud may prevent reaping. He got on with the sowing, no storms or clouds hindering him, and God gave the increase, for some fell on good ground and yielded a hundred-fold. He believed that the onus was on him to sow. Likewise the apostle Paul. What a great loss to the Church had he been deterred by the clouds of trouble! But what a crop because he sowed in all weathers and fields!

Recall Acts 20:21-25. Paul observed the clouds with only a passing glance. He did not deceive himself into saying there would be no clouds, for he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him. But no storms could prevent him testifying the gospel of the grace of God. Surely he was following the advice of Eccl. 11:6. He went on sowing; he knew not *“whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”* He did not suppose that both might be alike bad, for he knew God would give the increase. Is it morning now? Some say so; then sow thy seed. If you think it eventide, still sow.

We might ask: Is any sowing being done now, or are the labourers regarding the winds of contrary doctrine? Or are they regarding the clouds of trouble and neglecting the reaping? We have all heard the winds of doctrine that hold the sowers back. One wind says: *“It is reaping time; do not sow.”* Another says: *“It is sowing time; reaping is over.”* And still another says: *“It is reaping time, and sowing is to be deferred until the plough-share of trouble has prepared the ground afresh.”* The labourer is disturbed in mind, and fails to sow. Like our Lord, like Paul, we must get on with the sowing. We do not know which will prosper, or whether both will alike be good, but we do believe that God will give the increase. And we are reaping crops of truth due to the faithful labourers of the past. Others have laboured, and we have entered into their labours.

There is another sowing to be done—not the scattering of good news, but sowing within the hearts of ourselves. It is called in the Bible sowing to the Spirit, and those disturbed by the winds which deny character-development will not sow. (Gal. 6:7-9) What is sowing to the Spirit? Sowing to the flesh is following those practices which the flesh encourages: and *“the works of the flesh are manifest.”* (Gal. 5:19) One sows in the mind and reaps in the actions; and if the flesh continues to practise thus, another harvest results—*“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* (Gal. 5:21) So, sowing to the Spirit means sowing

those graces which the Spirit prompts. Again the sowing is in the mind, and again there are two crops—fruitage in this life and then life everlasting. Keep on this sowing; *“let us not be weary in (this) well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”* (Gal. 6:9) Remember, there are two crops from this sowing—the fruit of the Spirit now, and in the resurrection life everlasting. There was every encouragement to the Galatian brethren to be not weary in well-doing and disregard the winds and clouds. Similar reasoning is made by the apostle in Rom. 6:19-23—the yielding of oneself to uncleanness leads to still further iniquity with death as result, and the yielding of our members to righteousness leads to holiness and the end everlasting life.

But in this sowing to the Spirit, what must we sow? The obvious answer (that we sow seed) must be stressed. Something with life in it! And seed is useless unless it be sowed. The seed is clearly the words of life which the Holy Spirit has given to us. Sow the word in hearts and heads—there will be fruitage. Do not leave the seed in the packet! Millions have Bibles, but leave the words unopened and unsown. In another way of reasoning we must sow that which we hope to reap. If we want a crop of turnips we sow turnip seed—no other seed will do. And so, if we desire the fruitage of love, joy, peace, etc., we must sow these graces, or no crop will result. Some may say: *“We need more brotherly love”*—and to them the answer is, *sow it*. But if we observe the clouds (irrespective of who caused the clouds) no sowing will be done, and we shall still be expecting more brotherly love from others, but have done nothing to encourage it. Sow these graces in our own hearts and scatter where we can—there will be a crop even now, and life everlasting awaits us.

Some have been to studies where the subject for discussion was not to their liking; few joined in, and the meeting lacked warmth. Feeling uncomfortable, they have not sown the truth, and therefore have not reaped its fruitage. But unconsciously the seeds of discontent have been sown in their hearts, and no one has profited. Some have said: *“I went to the meeting and did not get a crumb.”* To them the answer is: *“If you had brought some bread all would have had a crumb.”*

Let us sow the seed of truth, for this seed is alive, and must therefore reach fruition. Sow it in our own hearts and sow it in the meeting. The onus is on us to sow. It must yield because it is alive. And then we shall be able to speak as did Paul: *“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”* (1 Cor. 3:6) Speak the words of truth in the meeting, another will add further comments, and God will give the increase; and so

will be found that true unity—“*He that planteth and he that watereth are one.*” (1 Cor. 3:8)

We may pick grains of sand which look like seed, yet they will give no crop; but from life-bearing seed as small as mustard large plants will grow. We are amazed that so much results from such small seed, and we realise that God has given the increase. The growth from seed to plant is ever a mystery to man, as our Lord said in Mark 4:26-28. So, if we sow the seeds of truth in our own hearts it cannot fail to grow, though we know not how. Then let us sow. (In the parable of the sower the grain was broadcast, not sown in selected ground. From which it may be reasoned that in the broadcasting of the gospel there is more hope of crop than in ground of our own choosing.) Do not expect fruition immediately. “We cannot eat the fruit while the tree is in blossom,” said Disraeli. Patience will be needed, but there will be a crop, for it will follow the Divine rule—“*first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.*” (Mark 4:28) It will need no super-gardening to make it grow, for the seed has life in it. The main act of character-development is seed sowing—God will give the increase. Does not the Bible speak to us of growth, rather than building, as its picture of character-development? Building is the assembling of stones and wood ready cut, and differing buildings may be built with the very same material. No such difference results from growth of the same seed. If we each sow to the Spirit, we shall each reap the same crop, for character will grow, we know not how, and each will reap the same crop in the resurrection—life everlasting.

By the gift to each of the Church of the Holy Spirit, God Himself begins the sowing. It is given to every man to profit withal. This gift we could not obtain by any other means, and it is the means by which we become members of the Body of Christ, for God sets the members everyone of them in the Body as it has pleased Him. He then starts the life of character growth by His gift. *Let it grow!* “*Be filled with the Spirit; pray for the Spirit: quench not the Spirit*”; and act so that the prayer will be answered. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into all truth; and thus it follows that we must go and dwell in those conditions where the sown seed may prosper. We must go where the words of life are to be found, for that is the seed. We must seek the fellowship of those who also have the seeds of truth; there, as it were, to exchange seeds or grains of truth; there to follow up the sown seed by watering. And, acting on the Bible paradox “that he who would have his life shall lose it,” we shall sow in our own hearts by giving away the seed to our fellows. He who gives it away keeps it, for, by dispensing it becomes impressed upon his own heart and so he

keeps it. Do not hoard it; do not leave the seed in the packet; give it away! Plant it; someone else will water it, and God will give the increase. We sow in fellowship; but some, regarding the winds, will think it cosier by the fireside, and will stay at home. Not sowing, they will not reap. Except that by isolating themselves they sow dissatisfaction in their own hearts and will reap its crop. And some cautious ones may say: *“I am not sure that if I sow there will be fruitage,”* or, *“I will sow a little, and if it flourishes I will sow more.”* To such the words of 2 Cor. 9:6 seem appropriate, we shall reap as we sow—if sparingly, so we shall reap; and if bountifully, so shall we reap. The onus is on us to sow; God will give the increase.

We sometimes regard the winds even in fellowship, saying to ourselves: *“I will not bring up such and such a topic,”* but someone is the loser, for fellowship includes the free discussions of all Bible questions. On the basis that the best meetings are those where, all contribute, remember the words of Paul: *“That which every joint supplieth,”* (Eph. 4:16) for this will make increase of the body.

Recall the error of the Galatian brethren. According to Paul, they started to sow to the Spirit, but reverted to the bondage of the flesh. After receiving the gospel of grace, they were returning to “another” gospel. *“Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* (Gal. 3:3) Paul was disturbed by their change, for their groundwork of justification was leaving them, and they were thinking of returning to the Law from which they had been freed in Christ. And how could they reap the fruitage of love, joy, etc., if they were sowing to the flesh? A little leaven was leavening the whole lump, for they were sowing the wrong seed. May it not be said of us: *“Ye did run well; who did hinder.”* (Gal. 5:7) Hence the exhortation of Gal. 6:7-9. *“In due season we shall reap”* does not mean that sometime, somehow, we shall reap; for the principle of growth is that fruition comes at its due season. In due season means the season when it is due. In the season of God’s appointing, “that day” we shall reap the eternal crop—if we faint not—if we regard not the winds.

BJD

All the way my Saviour leads me;
Cheers each winding path I tread;
Gives me grace for every trial,
Feeds me with the living bread;
Though my weary steps may falter,
And my soul athirst may be,

Gushing from the Rock before me,
Lo! a spring of joy I see.

Bible Students Hymnal,

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LEARNING TO LIVE WITH THE GLORY OF GOD

We begin here and now, while on earth, to become aware of that which will occupy our minds and Spirit's vision throughout the endless ages of glory to come; the beauty of the Lord, the beauty of His holiness, the blessed glory of the character, the attributes and the ways of Our Heavenly King. A special fragrance fills this place, it permeates through the veil into the Holiest of all. In the type the holy incense was specially formulated, compounded and set apart for most sacred use. Here we have the most blessed reality of that typical fragrance. To those who dwell in this "greater and more perfect Tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11) this sweet incense is the breath of heaven itself. The very atmosphere even this moment emanates from and surrounds the Throne of God. It is breathed by those who have His spirit both sides of the veil. It is the atmosphere of Holiness, of Heavenly love. It has mountaintop purity. It is fresher and sweeter than anything of earth. Emanating from the Lord, it finds response in each heart that becomes its vessel.

The Love of God overflows into His people. It embraces all that is pure, and true, and all that is holy and good. It is characterised, wherever found, by its joy in all those things which delight the heart of the Lord. Fullness of mercy, compassion, tenderness, patience, understanding,—all that God is. Such are the ingredients of the sweet incense with which the Lord endows His beloved children. It produces within us that affinity with the things that are divine. It is that most blessed family bond which unites with the Father, the Lord Jesus, and each member. It flows on, with blessed anticipation, and readiness to embrace every creature.

Paul speaks of the Lord's people becoming filled with the fulness of God. This infilling, he says, takes place as we continually contemplate the glory of the Lord. This year, and indeed each year of our pilgrimage, is the year of our change! Paul had in mind the effect upon Moses of old when he spake with God face to face. Not that he saw God, for no man has seen God at any time. (John 1:18)

There was a veil. Moses was enabled to behold the afterglow of the Lord's goodness as He passed by. We picture it like a glorious sunset. This was a mount of transfiguration experience for Moses, and as he descended that mount the glory of God shone in his face. He had beheld the glory of the Lord, and was changed. What had absorbed and awed his mind on the mount he now reflected from his being.

A greater than Moses is here. The fulness of that spirit of holiness in the heart of Jesus was poured out without restraint to fill the whole place with its clinging fragrance. Jesus was here, and He is here still. His fragrance clings to those who follow Him now through that first veil. As saints pass beyond that second veil, they leave behind a trail of broken alabaster boxes.

Behold the cloud of incense rise from every heart in which He dwells. The Master lives within the house, abundantly, the incense tells.

Such a state of heart absorbed in the glory of the Lord is learning to dwell with that glory, which is to be its eternal abode.

The word for “saint” in the New Testament is *agios*. The main stem means something of earth, but it is preceded by a definite negative, so that the whole word means “not of earth.” This is characteristic of the way in which the heavenly state is described. When Paul was caught away to the heavenly realm in vision, he said that he heard things which are not lawful to utter. (2 Cor. 12:4) The meaning of words is dependent upon experience. “Cat,” would mean nothing to us if no such creature existed in the material world. The heavenly realm is beyond present experience, and therefore cannot be expressed with meaningful words. Hence we find in Scripture various expressions which use contrast with the present experience. In this way we are helped to glimpse something of those glories we cannot yet fully bear. “Unfading,” says Peter, and “Unspeakable.” “Not mortal,” says Paul, “Not corruptible.” “Not after the image of earthly things at all.” “Not finite,” “beyond limits or bounds.”

Perhaps one of the greatest contrasts is between time, and eternity. Time is a dimension belonging to this material realm. Time sets a boundary to everything we experience, everything we do. Our minds are geared to this realm of time. It is therefore not easy to conceive that realm where time is no more, the realm of the eternal. Our Heavenly Father, we are told, inhabits eternity.

One of the greatest thinkers of recent years was Einstein. Perhaps he came nearer than any in pushing the boundaries of awareness beyond the limits of this present experience. He, it was, who conceived the possibility of time being an illusion. He suggested it to be a concept of the mind of those who dwell in time. Beyond such limited thinking and engulfing it, he theorized the probability of a timeless realm. In such a realm the whole history of man, past, present, and future, is spread out for comprehension

in one sweeping view. The Scriptures have long anticipated such concepts. The Lord has known all His works from the beginning. It was according to that divine foreknowledge that He could view that completed Christ of many members before the foundation of the earth.

Over recent years some interesting studies have been progressing in Israel in what has become known as “the Bible code.” Some may not be really sure what to make of this rather surprising idea. Hidden in the Scriptures, it is claimed, are an untold number of messages relating important news items both of man’s past, and of this present day. By use of a computer program, words have been discovered, spelled from letters of equal distance apart. Now we know that any large enough quantity of words or letters may produce patterns of haphazard or random coincidence. The “Bible code” is different, however, in that these words form coherent messages. Words are found bisecting each other, or in close proximity, with meaning and relevance to our day. The degree of probability of such messages happening by random chance are estimated at many thousands to one. The only way that such a complexity of coded writing could be formulated in the first place, it is agreed, would be by a mind capable of viewing man’s entire history in one grand sweep. The implications of this discovery are so great that scientific minds see their theories threatened. Scientists have long stated that the ability to state any happening beforehand is impossible. They have therefore discounted as nonsense the prophetic word of Scripture. The attitude of mind of these learned men towards the concept of “the Bible code” has therefore been one of scepticism. The code is also undermining the realm of Bible criticism by those clerics who suppose that the Torah (and other portions of the OT) had various authors, and who claim to trace their compositions by the different titles used of God in various parts. However, students of the Bible too may share a sense of wariness. Daniel 12, verses 4, and 9, speak of the sealing up of the book “till the time of the end.” Habakkuk 2, verse 3, states, “For the vision [is] yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie:..” We have our own way of understanding these texts in relation to the running out of the great time periods leading into this day of Christ in which we live. The “wise” who “shall understand,” (Dan. 12:10) have not been conceived as University Professors of Mathematics, equipped with computer programs. Rather, these have been thought of as the “babes” and “nothings” of this world. To these, the Father reveals things “hidden” from the “wise” of this world. (Matt. 11:25) Thus does He bring to nothing the wisdom of men. Some debate may therefore arise as to how we should view this recent and astounding discovery.

So, we have the statements of the prophetic Word of Scripture. We now also have the astonishing messages of “the Bible code.” We may accept either one or indeed both of these as sources of truth. The fact underlying both remains, that Our God surveys the end from the beginning. We are learning to live with such a Being, with a Mind and Judgment perceptive beyond our thought. We are learning to live with the concept of divine Sovereignty, His complete ability to achieve everything that He designs. We are learning to live with a divine foreknowledge that takes into account the exercise of human freewill. Each of these attributes and much, much more, compose the glory of God.

When Paul met Jesus on the Damascus road, we read in the Acts 26:13, that a light brighter than the midday sun shone along the road. [*kata’ followed by accusative = along*] It was the glory of God in the face of Jesus. Each step along the way increases our perception of the glory of God. It is a shining light, brighter than the midday sun. It shines along the way we tread. And it sanctifies. It is a glory that changes those into whose hearts it shines. Beholding, we reflect. Our God is beautiful in holiness. He will beautify His sanctuary. What this means is that the Lord Himself will be the beauty of the place wherein He dwells. He dwells with the contrite, the meek of the earth who mourn for sin. He dwells with the poor in spirit who are the pure in their heart’s desires. His fulness is for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who thirst after God, as the hart (deer) braying for the water brooks. He is a God that hides Himself, the world do not know Him. He is a Father that waits with delight to reveal Himself to His seeking child.

How amiable are His tabernacles. (Psalm 84:1) We read in one place that it was noised that Jesus was in the house. In like manner it will become evident when the Lord God dwells within the heart of His own. It is manifest in certain attitudes of mind and heart. A deep infilling of the fulness of God accompanies a delicate and captivating expression of holiness. It is a family likeness that cannot be hid. It becomes the mark or seal of all those that are His. It is a continual offering of praise, a living spirit and true worship of God, in the beauty of holiness.

Let us indulge now in reflecting on one most blessed aspect of the beauty of holiness. It results from the continual beholding of the glory of God. Thus, one of its chief attractive qualities is its complete absorption in the Lord and the things of God. “Wist ye not that I must be about the things of My Father?” Absorption in the things of God, means enthrallment in His goodness and glory. We are captivated by the very beauty of the Divine

Character. We become engrossed in that which utterly delights and satisfies the heart and mind. Such an attitude stems from an increasing awareness of all that Our Father is, all that He comes to mean to us. We find the drawing power of His love and do not wish to resist. To know Him, becomes the driving preoccupation of life. It forms a strong distraction from all in this present world that would distress or offend.

Isa 58:11 “The LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

Psalms 65:4 “Blessed [is the man whom] thou chooseth, and causeth to approach [unto thee, that] he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, [even] of thy holy temple.”

Such absorption means dwelling in that other realm with the Lord. Here we enjoy those present blessed realities of that One Who is beautiful in Holiness. Here we share too that grander vision that belongs to He that inhabits eternity. Here present and future merges together, until difficult to separate. Thus, are we enabled to enjoy today the blessedness of hope’s tomorrow. The word absorption means “sucking in.” As a beauty of holiness, it describes a state of hunger and thirst for the things of the Lord. As the hart panting for the water brooks, so pants our soul after Thee. (Psa. 42:1)

Jer. 31:14 “I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.”

In the state of holy absorption lies the power of translation. We are thus translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Like Enoch of old, our daily walk is with the Lord. Each day we are drawn closer, until one day we are near enough for the Lord to translate us, through that veil, unto Himself. Every day of holy contemplation, the consciousness of that glory that surrounds us becomes more real. It is like a shining light along the way, and it grows more bright. It is the Lord’s response to the desires He has implanted into our heart.

Our cry ascends each day with that of David. “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.” (Psalm 43:3,4)

NOTICES

Warrington Class Easter Convention
Sunday 31 March
Crick Village Hall, Bucknills Lane, Crick, Nr. Rugby NN6 7SX
For further information John Thorner

For those who wish to keep the memorial of our Lord's death at the time nearest the anniversary, it is suggested that this year **Sunday 21 April 2024 (14 Nisan) after 6 p.m.** is the appropriate date and time.

Bible Students Seminar Day
Saturday 27 April
 Venue TBC

Bible Students Fellowship Conference
 High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon
14-18 August 2024 DV
 For information, please email—nick.charcharos@btinternet.com

Gone from us
 David Chandler

There will be a last day of pilgrimage for each one of us. There will come a last step of the way, a last trial, a last moment of weakness. Then “face to face”—What will it be? The glory that surrounds us now we see as through a glass. It is reflected from the Master's face in such a way that we can bear. But then, as scales fall from the eyes, that glory we shall see unveiled. Our sight will be as of angelic hosts who daily look upon the Father's face, and in full beauty shall we then behold our King.

Dear brethren, may these senses grow to bless each day we tread below, combining love's serenity with deepest sense of urgency. The peace of God, in full accord, with sense of triumph in the Lord.

THE LEGEND OF THE VIOLET

*The first Easter morn
when earth united to rejoice,
Christ walked into a garden
and each flower raised its voice,
And as they sang their hymns of joy
with happy, sweet accord,
A little violet tried in vain
to see the risen Lord.*

*And as he came, the violet sighed,
“If I could only be
As tall and bright as other flowers
then he might notice me.”
But when he reached the violet,
the Saviour paused awhile,
The violet blushed and bowed its head
beneath the Master’s smile.*

*And it really didn’t matter,
not being grand and tall,
For Jesus loves all living things,
however great or small.
And to this day all violets
Bow their faces toward the sod
Remembering that meeting
with the blessed Son of God.*

Songs of the nightingale