

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Luke 2:14



“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”

Isa. 32:17

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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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"LORD, you will grant us peace." (Isaiah 26:12 NLT)

"We'll be home for Christmas." "It will be over by Christmas." That was the hope and expectation of soldiers or internees during the two world wars of the last century. Sadly some never saw home again or found those homes ruined. Others returned at last with joy, although facing emotional turmoil from what they experienced. The words given to Isaiah many years ago speak the hopes of individuals. Yet what God decrees will come to pass in due time and peace will truly arrive.

The angels at Bethlehem also gave us this expectation and promise when they said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14) May it be soon if God so wills!

Peace will have a chance when Satan is bound. Rev. 20:1,2 speaks of an angel coming down from heaven and having a chain in order to bind him at the appointed time. Angels, otherwise known as messengers, have spoken messages of calamity as well as blessing. It is always right to consider those messages and to what time period it is speaking or if it is until another event appointed afterwards. But the plan of God will be a success.

THE SIMPLE FAITH

Before me, even as behind,
 God is, and all is well.

*John Greenleaf Whittier,
 Poems of the Way*

Christian Joy

Christians have a joy of spirit, of which no earthly experience can rob them, and their joys increase daily, yearly, as they ripen in Christian experience, and as they grow in knowledge and in grace. Theirs is a privilege of access to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, and a privilege of communion with the Heavenly Father and with their Lord Jesus Christ. They may rejoice in the privilege of being God's ambassadors, and of telling the Good Tidings to others, thus to "show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. 2:9) Oh, great are the privileges and mercies and blessing of these Spiritual Israelites, far more than compensating for their discipline, tribulations and oppositions!

*Bible Study Monthly
September October 1980*

Serenity

We all know the almost miraculous effect that one strong poised mind can have over a panic-stricken multitude, how a few calm words and clear authoritative directions will produce an immediate result and reduce confusion to something like order. This influence, which is so obvious on marked occasions, is always felt, and leaves its impress everywhere. In quietness and confidence there is always strength. (Isa. 30:15) One poised mind has more effect than many restless, uncontrolled ones.

It is well worth while to spend time in cultivating quietness of spirit. It is not until the peace of God garrisons our hearts and thoughts that the world and all belonging to it can be seen in their right proportions, and energy needed for co-operation with God in the working out of his plans is set free. Many mysteries remain, problems are unsolved. We cannot see how all things will be made to work together for good, but we feel that God sees, and we have faith instilled into us to leave all things restfully with him, and let him unfold his plans little by little, and show us our share in them. We know that He "*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.*" (Eph. 3:20)

*Bible Study Monthly,
May June 1977*

Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind... War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.—*John F. Kennedy*

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook

THOUGHT ON ISAIAH 32:17

“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” (Isa. 32:17).

There is no peace in the world today. Even the U.N. peacekeeping forces are armed with guns and armoured vehicles and find themselves the targets of both sides of the contending forces. Even if the great powers settled their differences and began to live amicably together, there are many lesser powers thirsting for war and conquest. Almost a century of League of Nations and United Nations has failed to achieve peace. How certain it is that the mutual rivalries, jealousies, and greed of Nations, great and small, is greater by far than their desire for peace. How clear that, left to man’s own efforts, peace on earth will never be achieved.

Yet it will come. *“The LORD said...as truly as I live, all the (whole) earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.”* (Num. 14:20,21) A time has to come in human history when God intervenes to command the attention and allegiance of men. A world Empire there must be in which men are brought face to face with the realities of life and for a season have their war-like and anti-social impulses restrained whilst they are required to learn the laws by which, alone man must live. Men of God of olden time knew of this and foresaw such an era and described it in words that will never die. Christians today look for it and some perceive in the present well-nigh hopeless state of human affairs the long-foretold signs which herald the imminent dawn of that day, the Age in which the Kingdom of Christ rules supreme amongst men, and the vision of Isaiah quoted above becomes reality.

Bible Study Monthly, November December 1983

Since 1983 there have been conflicts beginning and ending. There was the end of the Cold War in 1989. Nevertheless there was the war in former Yugoslavia following the break-up of that country; two wars in Iraq and the invasion of Afghanistan.

In 2023 there is still no peace in the world despite the efforts of people everywhere. The war in Ukraine continues. The recent attack on Israel. Civil war continues in parts of Africa including military coups in Gabon, Niger and Sudan. The effect of the Revolution in Libya left that nation unprepared for the consequences of the recent storm leading to large loss of life, that one local man there compared it to the flood of Noah. The effects of civil war are still being felt in Syria and Yemen. One commentator said “is the United Nations fit for purpose?”

A KING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

A short study in the Millennial Visions of Isaiah

Part 3

The latter part of Isaiah's thirty-second chapter seems to be a pen-picture of one aspect of the transition from this age into the next, almost as though the prophet, after describing the general characteristics of the "reign of righteousness" as it is going to affect ordinary men, turns his eyes upon those who in this age have wielded authority and exercised power over those same ordinary folk and tells them in no unmeasured terms that the time of their luxurious indulgence is ended and that conditions will be very different in the Millennial Kingdom. His especial theme is the passing away of the works of man as exemplified in the cities and palaces and fortresses of this present order of things, and the coming into its own of that world of Nature, of mountains and valleys and fields and streams, which have been so cruelly despoiled by heedless and callous men but in that day is to become the environment in which redeemed mankind will live its life. *"They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid."* (Micah 4:4)

First of all, then, in this section of his thesis, Isaiah addresses the luxury-loving, indolent, wealthy women of Jerusalem. *"Rise up, ye women that are at ease;"* he commands, and the scorn that is in his voice comes to us even in the printed words. *"Hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years ("days above a year" is the Hebrew, an idiom meaning "soon" "imminent") shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come."* (Isa. 32:9-10). In every age the "idle rich" have lived upon the industry of the poor; the abundant harvests of the land have yielded their quota to the luxurious living of the propertied classes, many of whom have been content to take, and live on, their gains without contributing any kind of work or labour themselves. These "careless daughters" of Jerusalem were parasites of this kind. There was plenty of refinement and luxury in Jerusalem in Isaiah's day. The continued connection of Judah and Israel with the merchant nation of antiquity, the Phoenicians, whose capital city was Tyre, a connection that commenced in David's day with his friendship with Hiram, king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1) was continued by Solomon (1 Kings 5:10-12) and later by Ahab the husband of Jezebel, daughter of the then king of Tyre, brought all of the world's products into Jewish homes. Dwellers in Jerusalem could obtain for themselves—if they had the money—any and every article of ornament and luxury that the world afforded. The contrast between these plutocrats and the simple hardworking peasantry of the Judean highlands was very great, and Isaiah

was not the only prophet who fearlessly denounced the indolence and the profligacy of the rich. That the judgment of God would one day come upon them he had no doubt. *“There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.”* (Isa. 24:11-12) Adroitly, he connects Jerusalem, the wicked city, with her daughters and the condemnation he pronounces is equally applicable to both. Jeremiah too is equally forthright. *“I have likened the daughter of Zion”* (Jerusalem), he says, *“to a comely and delicate woman...Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up...For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; (with judgment) she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.”* (Jer. 6:2-6)

But Isaiah was seeing something more distant than the overthrow of Jerusalem that came in the days of Nebuchadnezzar; and the “idle rich” for whom his burning words of reproof were chiefly intended were those of this recent century A.D. rather than these of the eighth century B.C. Isaiah’s prophecy here had already passed into the sphere of the Millennial Age and he had already described some of the conditions of that rule of righteousness inaugurated by the king who is to reign in righteousness. So the condemnation of verses 9 to 12 of Chapter 32 is a condemnation of the idle and heedless materialists of this present time, when all their works and all their possessions and all their buildings and cities are crumbling before their eyes. They shall lament, he declares in verse 12, for the cattle-clad hills, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. Today we see that word fulfilled. “They that have” are lamenting as never before over the loss of their possessions and their privileges. Under this figure of a disintegrating city in which the buildings are falling down and Nature is moving in to cover the wreckage with quick growing undergrowth we have a vivid picture of the passing of current civilisation, and with that, the passing of the rule of man. *“Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city; because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks.”* (Isa. 32:13-14). Those who live in the cities of England had good cause during the war to know how quickly the ragged ruins of man’s making become invested with the green of weeds and flowers and shrubs; in a matter of three or four years the derelict sites of bombed buildings in the heart of London became hidden beneath a tangle of self-sown vegetation and on occasion quite sizeable trees. That is Nature’s return to the places from which man has ousted her to put up their own erections, erections which have no life in themselves and as soon as they

crumble under the weight of man's own evil forces must give place to the vigorous, irresistible tide of life that sweeps from the places of fields and trees. The thorns and briars come first, yes, but Isaiah goes on to show that after the thorns and briars come the fruitful fields and the quiet arts of agriculture, and then God's earth will be as He intended from the first. But all that comes later on in the chapter.

The judgment that is proclaimed, then, is one that comes upon the world at the time of Christ's taking his kingdom and commencing his reign. In symbolic imagery the cities are destroyed, their buildings broken down, the scenes of gaiety and debauchery in the "houses of joy" brought to an end. The palaces are forsaken—what a toppling of thrones and a losing of crowns there has been in these last days, the "Day of his Preparation!" The forts and towers shall be for dens of wild animals—what revelation of impotency of each military weapon is made almost as soon as it has been invented, counter-weapon matched against each new device of military science. The whole world system is crumbling, and the world is becoming a place where thorns and briars are spreading quickly over the ruins that man has made himself. Even in a literal sense these things are true of the world's cities and areas that people inhabit; how much more true it is in a symbolic or a spiritual sense of the world order that, as Peter says, is to pass away with a great noise! One of the finest passages in the whole of the Bible from a purely literary point of view is the one in which Isaiah's brother-prophet, Jeremiah, saw the same thing. "*I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger.*" (Jer. 4:23-26). "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18) the Apostle tells us, and although this crowning disaster to the work of humankind and this irretrievable ruin of men's systems of life and of government is entirely due to man's fault and altogether to man's adoption of the rule of selfishness it is nevertheless quite correctly described as a manifestation of the wrath of God—that God who loves the sinner while He hates the sin, and is working silently, patiently, and effectively to eliminate the sin so that He can receive the repentant and chastened sinner back into reconciliation with himself and give to him his eternal inheritance.

This is where Isaiah moves on into that position also. Like the God he served, this farsighted prophet of good tidings had no mind to proclaim

woe and disaster without declaring the sequel. The thorns and briars were to come up, the palaces and fortresses to become ruins, the city to be abandoned and darkness cover the whole scene of desolation, but only for a time—“until”...

Until what?

“Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.” (Isa. 32:15).

This is a “key” Scripture. The pouring out of the Spirit from on high, on all flesh, is pre-eminently a sign of the inauguration of the Kingdom. The ruins of the Time of Trouble are to lie waste only until that glad day has dawned and then a breath of new life will come upon the world. Here is where the natural picture of the exuberant life of the countryside invading the ruined city and clothing its broken brickwork with Nature’s endless variety of form and colour has its application. The Millennial Age is essentially an age of verdant fields and fruitful trees and sparkling streams, and so soon as Armageddon is past, the sprawling ruins of man’s making will give place to the all-conquering beauties of Divine creation. The wilderness shall become a fruitful field and the old broken-down palaces and fortresses be seen no more. *“Is it not yet a very little while,”* asks Isaiah again (29:17,18), *“and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.”*

This pouring out of the Spirit from on high, resulting in the vivifying of the very soil so that Nature herself responds, is probably literally as well as spiritually true. The power of the Holy Spirit will without doubt be exercised creatively as it was at the first in bringing the earth itself to that degree of fruitfulness which will make it a fitting and adequate abode for the millions of redeemed humanity. That the Spirit does exert such power in the material creation is evidenced by the noble words of Psalm 104:30, where, speaking of the living creatures of the earth, the animals and the birds and the fishes, the Psalmist says *“thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.”* If that is true in this age of the earth’s incompleteness, how much more in the day of its fulness!

Dr. Moffatt, in one of his rare flashes of insight, renders this passage in a very appealing manner. *“Yet one day from the heights of heaven a spirit*

shall breathe into us, till the downs grow like an orchard, and the orchard like a forest." (v.15) The whole picture is that of fruit-bearing trees rising up to take the places of the thorns and briars which at the first grew up over the ruins of the city, and then those fruitful trees growing so sturdy and luxuriant that they become as it were a veritable forest. This brings us very near to Ezekiel's vision of the trees of life growing on both sides of the river of life, and the constantly ripening fruit and evergreen leaves that are to be for the food and for the healing of the nations. (Ezek. 47:12)

This is where righteousness is triumphant. *"Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."* (vv.16-17). There is a contrast here. First there is the desolation of briars and thorns, the wreck of the old world, on which Divine judgment has come. Judgment is to remain on that wilderness. But that same wilderness is to give place to an orchard of fruit trees, a "fruitful field," and in that fruit-bearing grove, that is the symbol of the new world, righteousness is to remain. The severity of God's judgment remains on the "wilderness" until that wilderness is wholly swallowed up by the "fruitful field" which is to replace it. So, quite rapidly, the wreckage of the old world will be cleared up and the institutions of the Millennial Age take its place, institutions that are built on equity and inspired by righteousness. Here it is that Millennial blessings begin to come to humankind in consequence of the work of the glorified Church. This is the point at which the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father, and the beneficent influence of the reign of Christ begins to make itself felt in the earth, "The work of righteousness shall be peace." This word "work" is "*maaseh*," meaning the act of doing something. The ministrations of the "kings and priests" are here referred to; all that they do and all their activities are directed to the teaching and the education and the conversion to Christ of all who can be induced to repentance. *"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* (Dan. 12:3). The effect of their endeavours will be peace—peace on earth and peace in the hearts of men, a complete fulfilment of the angels' Bethlehem song. That is stressed in the rest of the verse. "The effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Peace and security! They are the two great blessings for which mankind is constantly yearning. The avowed object of the "Welfare State" is to secure these two things for all its citizens but it does not succeed in producing either. Only the kingdom of Christ can do that. And, once secured, it will be for all eternity. *"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor*

crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.” (Rev. 21:4).

And now Isaiah looks out across the sunlit Millennial landscape and he sees a people, dwelling safely, and happy at last. The city has gone, utterly destroyed in that last time of human madness and Divine retribution, but *“my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”* (v.18). Says Moffatt again *“my people shall have homes of peace, resting in houses undisturbed.”* The promise elsewhere is that *“they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shalt not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree”* (of the tree of life—Septuagint) *“are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.”* (Isa. 65:21-22). The picture is one of complete and unalloyed contentment.

It does seem as if the prophet is at pains to indicate the forsaking of city life for something far more closely in tune with Nature as the normal way of life in the Millennial Age. Here in this thirty-second chapter he sees the city destroyed and no indication of its resurrection; the redeemed multitudes are cultivating the arts of husbandry in a purely rural and agricultural setting. Somehow that seems appropriate: God surely never meant men to live crowded together in massed blocks of dwellings far from the fields and streams and flowers and trees. The Millennial Age must surely include among its many benefits a mighty “back to the land” movement. Instead of less than ten per cent of the world’s population working the land and growing the food that everyone must eat, as at present, all earth’s citizens will most probably take their share in co-operating with Nature for the provision of all that is needful. The promise that every man will plant his own vine and fig-tree, and sit under them and himself eat the fruit of them, is most likely to have a truly literal fulfilment. The evils of modern industrial and commercial life have created the world’s great cities; the end of that kind of life might well sound the death-knell of such creations and all the earth be made, as it was at the first, a garden.

Isaiah’s story is nearly told. The Holy Spirit has but one further scene to show him, a scene that seems to be intended more particularly for those who, as faithful and devoted footstep followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, follow these visions with an eager desire to find their own position and duty clearly indicated. The prophet now sees a fierce storm of destroying hail coming down upon the earth, pattering upon the trees of the forest

with a great noise, and finally crushing the ruined city, and such of its inhabitants as still remain, to the ground. At the same time—or, is it immediately the hailstorm has done its work, and ceased, and the sun is shining again—he beholds sowers, industriously scattering their seed in the water-sodden ground that has been softened by the storm waters, their oxen and asses treading the ground into soft mud in which the seed may quickly take root and germinate. *“When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be utterly abased. (margin) Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.”* (vv.19-20).

That was a familiar sight in Israel. So soon as the winter storms of hail and rain had temporarily water-logged and softened the ground the oxen and asses were quickly sent out to trample the soil, and the seed was quickly sown. What did the picture mean to Isaiah? It could only mean that the crushing hail of Divine judgment upon the city was in God’s economy a means of preparing the soil for a new sowing, and that the sowers would be ready. In his zeal and joy at the prospect Isaiah pronounced a blessing upon the sowers. But what does it mean in the reality? Nothing less than that in the outworking of the Divine plans, this tremendous judgment upon the nations which forms the prelude to the Millennial kingdom will itself be a means of preparing men’s hearts for the ministry of the Word in the next Age, for that Millennial sowing that is to yield so glorious a harvest. And the sowers will be ready. They are waiting, even now, but the time for sowing is not yet. The ground has yet to be softened by the down-rushing hail, but so soon as that has been accomplished the word will go forth “blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.”

The sowers will go forth. They will then have been gathered to be with their Lord and Head and be made like him, to see him as He is. They will have been presented faultless before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy. They will have participated in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Armed then with abundant power, enriched and fortified by their lives’ experiences, by virtue of patient endurance having been made merciful and faithful and sympathetic “priests,” they will come forth to commence the work of writing God’s laws in the hearts of men, and converting them to turn from sin to serve the living God. That is the great object of the Millennial reign, to reconcile to God as many as will be reconciled, to save for his eternal kingdom on earth so many as will be saved, to fulfil, at last, the plan that started its slow but sure development so many thousands of years ago in Eden. Isaiah saw, plainly, the end of

the story; he saw the “afterward of peace” which God has known all along He would achieve at last; it is a source of rare inspiration to us that he also was led to declare the blessedness of those who in this day and Age have been privileged beyond all measure in receiving the call to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. (Rom. 12:2) Having been thus called, justified, sanctified, glorified, they will come forth in the end of days to sow beside all waters, and long enjoy the ultimate fruitage of their works in the sight of God’s human sons dwelling in quietness and assurance for ever.

AOH

AFTERWARD

God’s ways are equal: storm or calm,
 Seasons of peril and of rest,
 The hurtling dart, the healing balm,
 Are all apportioned as is best.
 In judgments oft misunderstood,
 In ways mysterious and obscure,
 He brings from evil lasting good,
 And makes the final gladness sure.
 While Justice takes its course with
 strength,
 Love bids our faith and hope increase:
 He’ll give the chastened world at length
 His afterward of peace.

When the dread forces of the gale
 His sterner purposes perform,
 And human skill can naught avail,
 Against the fury of the storm,
 Let loving hearts trust in Him still,
 Through all the dark and devious
 way;
 For who would thwart His blessed will,
 Which leads through night to joyous
 day?
 Be still beneath His tender care;
 For He will make the tempest cease,
 And bring from out the anguish here
 An afterward of peace.

Look up, O Earth; no storm can last
 Beyond the limits God hath set;
 When its appointed work is past,
 In joy thou shalt thy grief forget.
 Where sorrow’s plowshare hath swept
 through,
 Thy fairest flowers of life shall
 spring,
 For God shall grant thee life anew,
 And all thy wastes shall laugh and
 sing.
 Hope thou in Him: His plan for thee
 Shall end in triumph and release;
 Fear not, for thou shalt surely see
 His afterward of peace.



Poems of Dawn

DANIEL IN BABYLON

12. Darius the Mede

“And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” (Dan. 5:31).

With the capture of Babylon by the Medes and Persians an entirely new life opened before Daniel. At eighty-four years of age he could reasonably have expected to spend his few remaining years in leisurely retirement; the fact that for twenty years past he had been excluded from any official part in the administration of government affairs had without doubt led him to re-organise his life so that he could give his entire time to the study and consideration of the future purposes of God. That much is clear, from the accounts we have of his visions and dreams, and the celestial visitants who came with the revelations and interpretations which have been of such interest and importance to students of every generation since. It is not at all an unusual thing for a man who has led a full and busy life in some business or occupation to hail his retirement as an opportunity for the closer investigation of Biblical truths to which he has not been able to give the attention he would have liked while the responsibility of earning a living or discharging a public office lay upon him. Daniel at the death of his king and benefactor, Nebuchadnezzar, must have felt something like that. For forty-two years he had endured the obligations of high administrative office in Babylon because he knew it to be the will of God that he should thus serve; when upon the accession of successive kings who had no use for him he was deprived of office and allowed to retire into private life, he must have hailed the change as of Divine direction and gladly betaken himself to the more continuous and diligent study of the Divine purposes. During the twenty years or so thus spent the fruits of his devotion were manifest in the dreams and visions and their interpretations with which we are so familiar.

Now the scene was to change again. The last official act of Belshazzar the last king of Babylon was to appoint Daniel third ruler in the kingdom and therefore the highest State official next to himself. At one stroke Daniel found himself restored to the position he had occupied under King Nebuchadnezzar. Almost immediately fresh responsibility was thrust upon him. The royal decree promoting Daniel to his new position had hardly been proclaimed when Belshazzar himself was dead, slain by the Median invaders. When Cyrus, seventeen days after the capture of the city, came looking for someone who could formally hand over the civil administration of the capital and the empire, it could very likely have been to Daniel he came. Perhaps in that very hall where only a few days

previously the supernatural writing had appeared on the wall, serried ranks of Median and Persian soldiers stood immovable whilst Cyrus, the invincible military conqueror, and Daniel, the gentle and yet firm man of God, transacted the formalities which even in those days, no less than in ours, marked the transfer of sovereignty from the vanquished to the victor.

What a tremendous stimulus to faith it must have been to Daniel, thus to witness with his own eyes the fulfilment of prophecy. Sixty-odd years previously he had stood in that same hall, a lad of nineteen or so, and declared to King Nebuchadnezzar "*Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee...the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*" (Dan. 2:38-45) Now he beheld the fulfilment of that prediction. The second of the four world empires had stepped upon the stage to play its part in the drama, and the Kingdom of Heaven was that much nearer.

Happy indeed if we can see, in the vicissitudes of earthly powers, the fulfilment of prophecy, evidences of the onward progress of the divine plan and the approaching of the Kingdom. We are not usually called, as was Daniel, to be personally closely linked with the political affairs of the kingdoms of this world. Our observation of their course can be from a much more detached standpoint and for that we can give thanks to God. It is probable that Daniel would have preferred not to have been so closely connected with State affairs in the idolatrous governments of Babylon and Persia—but he was called to that position by God and he was too loyal a servant of God to avoid the consequences of that call. Perhaps some of the more orthodox and bigoted Jews, captive in Babylon, criticised his acceptance of high office under the State as disloyalty to the principles of Judaism and the Law Covenant. Perhaps we ourselves, in our rigid adherence to what we hold as the principles of Christian living may criticise another who undertakes responsibilities or obligations which we would not be prepared to accept, and perhaps, in so doing we forget the Apostolic admonition. "*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.*" (Rom. 14:4) One of the hardest lessons we have to learn is that our Master has many varied tasks to be carried out on earth by his devoted followers and He must of necessity use various individuals in different ways. We must each serve and labour in accordance with the call that is given to us without expecting all our fellow-servants necessarily to serve after the same manner.

So Daniel found a new king to serve. "*Darius, the Median took the kingdom.*" Who was this Darius? It is so usual to think of Cyrus assuming

control upon the fall of Babylon and immediately sending the Jews home to build their Temple that the fact of Darius coming between Belshazzar and Cyrus is often overlooked. Whoever he was he confirmed Daniel's re-appointment as Chief Minister of the empire, and that too requires some explanation. How comes it that a man in high office in the defeated Administration is preferred above all the Median and Persian notabilities who would in the ordinary way be considered proper choices for the control of the vanquished people?

What has been called "the enigma of Darius the Mede" has puzzled many a student of the Bible history in times past. This king is one of the few whose name has not been found in any contemporary inscription. A similar situation existed with regard to Belshazzar until toward the end of the nineteenth century, and it had been freely declared by some scholars that Daniel had invented the name of a king who never existed. Nowadays the acts and history of Belshazzar are almost as well-known as those of Queen Victoria. Modern research and deduction has likewise succeeded in giving us a fair picture of Darius the Mede, at any rate sufficient to demonstrate the accuracy of the Book of Daniel.

To begin with, Cyrus was not the legal or acknowledged king of the Medo-Persian empire at the death of Belshazzar. The ruling dynasty was Median and Cyrus was not a Mede. The Median empire had its rise a century before the fall of Nineveh, and it was the joint invasion of Assyria by Cyaxares, king of Media, allied with Nabopolassar of Babylon, father of Nebuchadnezzar, which brought about the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. and the end of the Assyrian empire. This friendship between the two kings was cemented by the giving in marriage of Amytis the daughter of Cyaxares to Nebuchadnezzar the son of the Babylonian king.* Upon the death of Cyaxares, his son Astyages became king of Media. Cyrus, who was a lineal descendant of the kings of Elam, now subject to Media, was a leading general of the Persian forces in the armies of Media, for Persia also was at that time subject to Media. Astyages had given his daughter Mandane in marriage to Cambyses I, the father of Cyrus, but he himself died without sons. Upon his death Cyrus possessed, through his mother, the best claim to royalty over Media, and so became the most powerful figure in the empire. Ten years before the fall of Babylon he virtually deposed Astyages and became the real ruler, thus bringing the Persian element much more into prominence. The Medes were still predominant however, and Cyrus was not yet the acknowledged king. In any case he was still busily occupied subduing other nations and building up the empire.

*See family tree page 218

It used to be claimed that Darius the Mede was the son of Astyages and so the last legal king of Media, this upon the authority of the Greek historian Xenophon many years later who gave this supposed son the name of Cyaxares II. This statement was repeated by Josephus but it is now agreed that this claim, unsupported by any other historian of ancient times, is without foundation. A number of more recent considerations, too involved to elaborate here, renders it likely that Astyages, who had already occupied the throne of Media for many years, now formally added the empire of Babylon to his already far-flung dominions. Cyrus, ambitious as he was, preferred to wait until he could legally claim the title. Hence when Babylon fell at the hands of Cyrus, it was Darius the Mede who “took” the kingdom. The word is significant. It has the meaning of receiving a thing at the hands of another. A similar expression occurs in chapter 9:1 where Darius is said to have been “made” king over the realm of the Chaldeans. Darius did not acquire the kingdom for himself, it was won for him by Cyrus.

Less than two years later Darius died without sons, and now Cyrus, by virtue of his descent from Astyages through his mother Mandane, had the premier right to kingship. From now on the Persian element came to the forefront, but it was not until the time of Darius Hystaspes, the first truly Persian king, seventeen years later, that Persia took precedence over Media. The Old Testament yields an interesting confirmation of this fact. The Book of Daniel, completed by Daniel in the days of Darius the Mede and Cyrus, refers always to the “Medes and Persians,” Medes coming first. The Book of Esther, describing events in the days of Xerxes, son of Darius Hystaspes, has it “the kings of Persia and Media,” Persia now coming first.

Daniel 9:1 refers to Darius as the “son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes.” Ahasuerus in the native languages concerned is the same as the Greek Cyaxares, and in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit is called by that name. Other ancient historians are definite in stating that a Median king succeeded Belshazzar and was in turn replaced by Cyrus the Persian. It can fairly be stated therefore that the “engima of Darius the Mede,” although not yet completely solved, is, thanks to current research, not so much of an enigma as previously.

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first (one): that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was

preferred (distinguished himself) above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought (was minded) to set him over the whole realm.” (Dan. 6:1-3).

Three points in which the A.V. translation is inadequate have to be noticed. Daniel was not “first” of three presidents, but one of them. He was not “preferred” above the others but distinguished himself above them; and Darius had in mind his further promotion to be the Chief Minister of the entire Medo-Persian empire. The question naturally arises; why such honours to a representative of a defeated nation?

The answer, in the first place, lies in the fact that Daniel, and his sterling worth, were not entirely unknown to the Median king. The close friendship between the Median and Babylonian kings in the days of Nebuchadnezzar must have involved Daniel in some close contact with the Medes. It was the ambition of Cyrus and his Persians which attacked Babylon, not animosity on the part of the Median kings. Very probably Darius the Mede had a closer feeling for his royal Babylonian relatives than he had for Cyrus, whom he must have regarded as a usurper, even though Cyrus was his grandson. Amytis, Nebuchadnezzar’s queen, was sister to Darius, and Queen Nitocris, mother of Belshazzar, was his niece. In earlier and happier days there must have been plenty of going and coming between the royal houses of Babylon and Media. Darius might very well have been personally acquainted with Daniel in those days. What more natural thing, then, when he assumed sovereignty over the conquered people, to appease them and ensure peaceable submission by appointing as their immediate ruler the man who had been their chief Minister for forty years in times past, whom he knew personally and in whom he could place confidence.

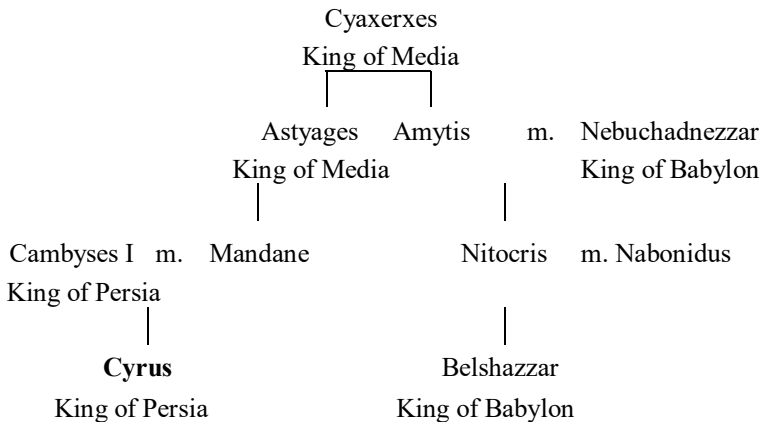
It would seem that Darius made the subjection of Babylon the occasion for a complete reorganisation of the empire. He created a hundred and twenty provinces (which by the time of Esther, fifty years later, had become one hundred and twenty seven—see Esther 1:1) and appointed a local governor over each. Above these came the three princes of whom Daniel was one, responsible directly to the King. It would seem logical to conclude that these three princes were set over Media, Persia, and Babylon respectively, Daniel being the appointed Minister for Babylon. The outstanding qualities of Daniel again marked him out for preferment and the king formed the design of promoting him to have authority over all three divisions of the empire, and at that the other officials took alarm and began to consult together to effect the disgrace of the hated Jew.

The indomitable spirit of this remarkable man nowhere shines out more brightly than at this point. At an age when most men would be considered past performing useful work for the community, he still made such an impression upon his fellows that he could be seriously considered for an administrative position that would tax the abilities of men half his age. Like Moses, Daniel’s “eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” (Deut. 34:7) Of him it could be truly said that he was immortal until his work was finished, and although, in the story, we are now within three years of the time when he leaves the stage, we see him, at the height of worldly power and influence, still the confidant of kings, still the object of unremitting hatred by powerful enemies, still, we may be sure, working quietly but energetically for the welfare of his own people, Israel, as yet held captive in Babylon. Here is an outstanding example of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God, entering into a man, inspiring him, sustaining him, rebutting all assaults of his enemies, prospering the way before him that through him some vital part of the purposes of God might be carried out.

We do well to take the lesson to heart. There is no limit to what God can do with a man who is wholly and unreservedly consecrated to him. Such a man must be prepared to suffer with equal fortitude success and failure, prosperity and adversity, the favours of men and their recriminations, serene always in the sure knowledge that all he does is for the furtherance of the Divine plans for all creation and that in the power of the Holy Spirit within him he must go forward and he cannot fail. That was Daniel’s secret.

(To be continued)
 AOH

FAMILY TREE OF KING CYRUS



THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

The genealogy of Jesus from David is given in Matt. 1 and Luke 3. Matthew has Joseph the reputed father of Jesus descended from David through Solomon and the kings of Judah, whilst Luke traces his mother Mary's descent from Nathan the younger brother of Solomon. Both lines converge on Zerubbabel the governor of Judah at the Return from Babylon and then they diverge again. There are some points of difference with the royal genealogy recorded in 1 Chron. 3. The A.V. rendering in Luke (v.23) appears to make Joseph the son of Heli Mary's father instead of Jacob; (Matt. 1:16) this is due to the translators having added the words "*which was the son of*" in each case, for which there is no justification. The Greek reads like a family tree, from Heli upwards, "*of Heli...of Matthat*" etc., (Luke 3:23-24) and the passage is more lucidly rendered "*Jesus, about thirty years of age, (supposedly the son of Joseph), of Heli, of Matthat*" etc.; Heli his Mother's father being his immediate male forebear in that line and Mary his mother as a woman omitted from mention. It is usually said that a complete pedigree from David is not to be found in the Scriptures but a study of the subject may well lead to an opposite conclusion.

Luke's account gives 19 generations from Jesus back to Zerubbabel; Matthew gives only 11. Since the period is nearly 600 years it is obvious that Matthew at least has omitted some names. Matthew's account gives Abiud (*Heb. Obadiah*) as the son of Zerubbabel but according to Chronicles the latter had no son of that name and the only Obadiah recorded comes two generations later and he was not in the royal line. Luke gives Joanna (*Heb. Johanan*) as son of Zerubbabel; here again he had no son of that name (Zerubbabel's son in the royal line was Hananiah, (v.19) which is a name closely akin to Johanan, but Hananiah had no son named Juda as demanded by Luke). It does seem therefore that in both the Matthew and Luke versions there is the omission of some names immediately following Zerubbabel. Luke mentions a Rhesa between Zerubbabel and Joanna, but this is not a name. "Rhesa" is the Aramaic word for "prince," equal to Hebrew "*vezin*," prince or noble, and this points to Luke having taken his data from a list written in Aramaic, the general language in use after the Babylonian captivity, having the entry "*Prince Zerubbabel*," his recognised position as leader of the restored nation under Cyrus.

It is evident then that neither Matthew's nor Luke's lists between Jesus and Zerubbabel are complete. Resource must be had to the royal pedigree

of the Davidic line in 1 Chron. 3 for assistance.

This chapter gives the line of descent of the kings of Judah from David to Jehoiachin and the continuing royal line for another eight generations, ending at about 432 BC in the days of Nehemiah. This line is clear cut and positive; the problem is to fill the gap, if gap exists, between this record and those of Matthew and Luke. This involves the probable number of generations in both the royal and the non-royal lines between Zerubbabel and Jesus. It would appear that the interval between firstborn to firstborn during late Old Testament times in the Middle East was an average 22 years, Examples are:—

Davidic kings, Solomon to Jehoiachin 379 years, 17 gens. = 22.3 years per generation.

Israeli kings, Jehu to Zechariah, 103 years, 5 gens. = 20.6 per generation.

Assyrian kings, father to son, 911-781 BC 130 years, 6 gens. = 21.7.

Parthian kings, from 3rd cent. BC 384 years, 17 gens. = 22.6.

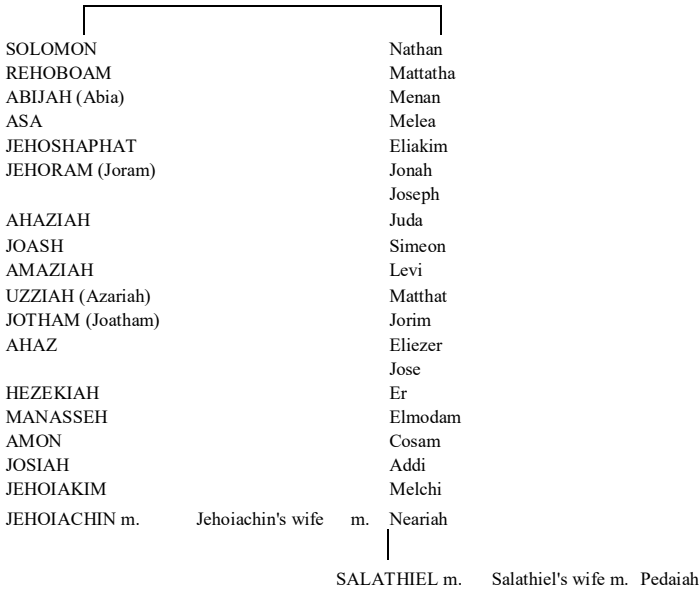
Seleucid kings, from 3rd cent. BC 247 years, 11 gens. = 22.5.

On this basis it might well be concluded that the generations in the royal line to Jesus averaged 22 years each. From the birth of Zerubbabel to that of Jesus, as far as can be deduced from relevant data, was about 560 years, and this implies 26 generations. Chronicles has 7 generations and Luke has 18, a total of 25, which seems near the mark. Luke's earliest name is Joanna (Johanah). The final generation in Chronicles lists the names of the seven sons of Elioenai without saying which of them carried on the royal line, but one of those names is Johanah!

Does this imply that Luke gave the full list of Jesus's forebears through his mother Mary back as far as the last name in Chronicles, Johanah, and then went straight to Zerubbabel, knowing his readers could get the intervening names from the O.T.? From there he gave the full line to Nathan, the son of David and younger brother of Solomon. If Luke's Joanna and Chronicles' Johanah are one and the same, the total number of generations would be 24, but some part of this line, the non-royal part, would involve later-born sons with corresponding longer generation intervals. This would fit in well with the 26 just mentioned. It remains then to consider Matthew's line.

Matthew goes from Jesus back to Abiud, 10 generations, on this basis a matter of 220 years. This implies a gap in Matthew's record of some 340 years. Since Luke traces Mary's line back to Zerubbabel as does that of Matthew with Joseph, it is obvious that Mary's line must have diverged

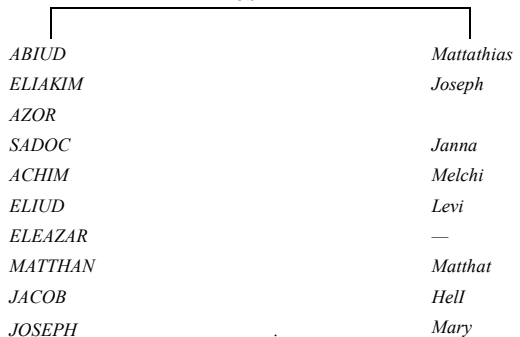
DAVID



- ZERUBBABEL
- HANANIAH
- SHECHANIAH
- NEARIAH
- ELIOENAI
- JOHANAN (Joanna)
- JUDA
- JOSEPH
- SEMEL
- MATTATHIAS
- MAATH
- NAGGE
- ESLI
- NAUM
- AMOS

- A Royal line from SOLOMON
- B Legal line from Nathan to show SALATHIEL
- C Non-royal line from Nathan

1 Chron. 3 gives A & B, Solomon to Johanan
 Luke gives C Nathan to Zerubbabel, Johanan to Mary.
 Matt. gives A & B Solomon to Zerubbabel, Abiud to Joseph



from the royal line at some time after 432 BC where Chronicles ended. Is it conceivable that Matthew gives the forebears of Jesus through Joseph in the legal royal line back as far as Abiud, and that this was the point where the two lines diverged? From there he skipped all intervening generations to Zerubbabel, and then continued with the royal descent of Judean kings back to Solomon the son of David. He did, even then, omit the three apostate kings, Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah as unworthy of inclusion in his list, and also Jehoiakim, father of Jehoiachin, but this is not material since these appear plainly enough in O.T. history.

These 10 generations in 220 years would place Abiud about 220 BC and so perhaps make him the firstborn son of Amos in Luke's list, to preserve the total 25 generations back to Zerubbabel. This would make him the elder brother of Mattathias son of Amos in Luke's list, and there were then 8 generations from Mattathias to Mary against 10 from Abiud to Joseph, which is what would be expected if Mary's line was from later born sons—the average generation being 27 years against 22 for the royal line.

If all this is a reasonable hypothesis, the position is:—

Luke gives the complete pedigree of Mary back to Johanan in about 432 BC. Chronicles carries on from Johanan back to Salathiel, father of Zerubbabel and Luke then traces their ancestry back another 20 generations to Nathan, son of David. There is only just enough room in this period to get that number of generations in, so that this list must be complete. Thus there is a complete pedigree from Mary back to David, and this was the natural "blood-relationship" line which made Jesus literally a son of David.

Matthew gives the first ten generations from Joseph back to Abiud, about 220 BC, where it is joined in the person of Amos by the non-royal line from Mary. Matthew breaks off here and resumes again at Zerubbabel—the intervening generations are all cared for by Luke and Chronicles. Matthew credits Zerubbabel and Salathiel as descended from Jehoiachin the exiled king which puts them in the line of ascent to Solomon and not Nathan. He then goes up the list of kings of Judah until he comes to Solomon. Again there is a complete pedigree but this time it is the official "legal" royal line from David through the kings of Judah.

This brings up the apparent disagreement as to the parentage of Salathiel and Zerubbabel. Chronicles and Matthew make Salathiel the son of Jehoiachin of Solomon's line but Luke says he was the son of Neri (*Heb.*

Neariah) of Nathan's line. Matthew and Luke both say Zerubbabel was the son of Salathiel, but Chronicles of his brother Pedaiah. The resolution of this problem involves a little excursion into history.

The last legal king of Judah/Israel was Jehoiachin, deposed by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC and taken prisoner to Babylon where he died more than forty years later. (His uncle Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to succeed him but he could not be true king while Jehoiachin lived; Zedekiah was deposed by the Babylonians eleven years later). Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon at 18 years of age, with at least two wives (2 Kings 24:3-14) but still childless. It had been decreed by the Lord that because of his apostasy no man of his seed should ever rule on the throne of David; he would be declared childless (Jer. 22:28-30). A like sentence had been passed upon his father Jehoiakim "*he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David.*" (Jer. 36:30). At the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar took steps to destroy the entire royal house so that none remained to rally the people again (Jer. 52:8-11). The Lord also said through Ezekiel at the same time that there should no more be a king in Judah until Christ should come "*whose right it is*" (Ezek. 21:25-27). It is evident therefore that the literal blood descent of the royal house of Judah came to an end at that point.

The means by which this was brought about had been indicated to King Hezekiah three generations earlier. His posterity, he was told, would end up by being eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon (2 Kings 20:18; Isa. 39:7). It was the custom of the Babylonians, and other warlike nations, having defeated a troublesome or rebellious people, to render their king and his sons incapable of fatherhood, so that the dynasty would die out and be unable to form a rallying point for possible future rebellion. This is what happened to Jehoiachin and any sons he had while in Babylon. With Zedekiah's sons already dead, Nebuchadnezzar could feel that the Davidic dynasty was extinct and would give no further trouble. What he did not reckon with, probably through ignorance, was the peculiarly Israelite custom of Levirate marriage.

An element in the Mosaic law was the provision for continuance of the family line where a man died without sons. In such case the brother or nearest relative took the dead man's wife and the son of such union was accounted legally the dead man's son and heir of his estate. The relevant law is stated in Deut. 25:5-6 from which it is known as Levirate marriage. The story of Ruth and Boaz is a notable instance. It would seem that since from the point of view of male issue Jehoiachin was as good as dead, this

law was invoked so that Neri (Neariah) of the line of Nathan took Jehoiachin's wife, and the son of that union, Salathiel, became credited to Jehoiachin as his legal son and heir and entitled to carry on the royal line.

But this did not happen at once. According to Chronicles, Jehoiachin had seven sons, all born in Babylon, of whom Salathiel was one. One of the others, *Pedaiah*, appears as father of Zerubbabel but the other five are named and not referred to again. (An eighth name, Assir, does appear in 1 Chron. 3:17 but this is an A.V. translator's mistake. "Assir" is Hebrew for captive, and the sense of the verse should be "*and the sons of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) the captive, Salathiel his son*"...etc.). The question arises, where and how do these five fit into the picture. The answer to this conundrum came only years ago in an unexpected manner. When Prof. Robert Koldewey excavated Daniel's Babylon in 1914 he sent home to Berlin three hundred cuneiform tablets which were stored awaiting decipherment. They remained unexamined until 1939, when the Assyriologist Wiedner translated them and found one dated in the 13th year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar which mentioned the captive Jehoiachin, King of Judah and his five sons, the five being under the care of a Jew named Kenaiah. The 13th year corresponds to 592 BC, by which time Jehoiachin had been in Babylon five years. Since he had at least two wives, perhaps more, there is nothing unlikely in his having sired five sons during that time, and one might ask why, in such case, was Salathiel the son of Neariah proclaimed heir-apparent to the throne. The answer to that may lie in the realm of political expediency. When Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive in 597 BC he probably did not intend to extinguish the Jewish monarchy; he left Zedekiah as king and took Jehoiachin to Babylon as hostage for good behaviour. But eight years later Zedekiah rebelled, the Babylonians returned in force, and in 586 BC, after three years savage fighting, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, killed Zedekiah's sons, took the rest of the people to Babylon and virtually depopulated Judea. It looks as though it was at this point that Nebuchadnezzar decided to extinguish the royal line and so any hope Jehoiachin may have had that one of his five sons, now between five and ten years old, would carry on his line was finally and brutally extinguished.

So Salathiel was born from Neariah and Jehoiachin's wife, perhaps about 582 BC, declared legal son of Jehoiachin with the right of succession, grew to manhood, and married at the usual age of 18. By this time Nebuchadnezzar had perhaps become aware of the significance of the Levirate marriage and nipped this attempt to circumvent his intentions by treating Salathiel as he had treated Jehoiachin. Once again the royal line

came to an end.

Then, in 561 BC, a few years later, Nebuchadnezzar died. His son and successor, Avil-Marduk, (Hebrew name Evil-merodach) was much more tolerantly disposed toward Jehoiachin, releasing him from prison and showing marked signs of favour (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31-34). If now, in this new climate of tolerance, the youthful Salathiel invoked the Levirate law as did his reputed father, so that his wife was given to his half-brother Pedaiah and of them was born Zerubbabel, he could be proclaimed legal son of Salathiel and so in his turn heir to the throne. Avil-Marduk, now king of Babylon, took no notice and so the royal succession of the Kings of Judah was assured. Both Salathiel and Zerubbabel were in fact of the non-royal line of Nathan but by means of the Law declared legal descendants of Solomon in the royal line. Pedaiah must have been the son of Neariah and his own wife since he does not figure in the royal succession and his inclusion as one of the sons of Jehoiachin in 1 Chron. 3:19 is probably to show that he was a link in the transmission of the royal line from Jehoiachin to Zerubbabel, although not a true son, which would have nullified the Lord's prohibition on the succession of any true son of Jehoiachin.

Thus seen, the natural line of descent of both Joseph and Mary came from Nathan the non-royal son of David, but by means of the Levirate Law both Salathiel and Zerubbabel were adopted into the royal line and so their descendants carried the right of succession until, probably, Amos in about 220 BC had two sons, Abiud (Obadiah) the eldest, who inherited the royal rights which ultimately led to Joseph, and Mattathias, a younger son, leading to Mary. Scripture declares that Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of David; it must follow that Joseph was the senior member of the Davidic line and, despite his humble station in life, the legal claimant to the throne had that throne been established in his own time.

AOH

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto *David* a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. (Jer. 23:5)

There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (Isa. 11:1)

For thus saith the LORD; *David* shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel. (Jer. 33:17)

Unto us a son is given:...and his name shall be called...The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of *David*, and upon his kingdom. (Isa. 9:6-7)

THE BINDING OF SATAN

“I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit (abyss), and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old (ancient) serpent, which is the Devil...Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit (abyss), and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more... and after that he must be loosed a little season” (Rev. 20:1-3).

The vision of the conflict between good and evil in the Book of Revelation comes at length to a time when a mighty angel is seen descending from heaven with a great chain in his hands; he takes forcible hold of the great red dragon which alone survives of the enemies of righteousness, binds him with the chain, casts him into the abyss, and seals the entrance with the sign of Divine authority that the nations should be deceived no more throughout the thousand years—the Millennium. Ardent longing for that day has led many to watch earnestly the signs of the times, and the question “Is Satan now bound? Is he in process of being bound? Is he yet to be bound?” are common.

The literal personality of the Devil is not always accepted nowadays; many feel that the Scripture references to Satan and Satanic power can be well understood as allusions to the presence and influence of evil in an abstract sense over humanity. There is no doubt, however, that the New Testament writers believed in Satan as a powerful celestial being in a state of open rebellion against God, directly responsible for the introduction of evil into the world and its promotion and development throughout human history. Origen in the 2nd century claimed that not only all humanity, but eventually the Devil himself, will succumb to the drawing power of Christ and so become reconciled and attain eternal life, but on the other hand at least three of the inspired writers—John, Isaiah, and Ezekiel—foresee the extinction of the personal Satan with the passing of evil from Divine creation and any exposition of Revelation 20 can only be on the basis that a personal being is referred to, and he is, and will be until his end, incorrigibly and persistently evil.

This 20th chapter of Revelation pictures the work of the Millennial Age, when the Lord Christ is the acknowledged ruler of this earth and all its peoples are to be made fully conversant with the Divine standards of life and enjoy the opportunity to make their momentous choice, for good or evil, for life or death. The decision is to be a personal one, and none will be able to say that powers of evil from outside have hindered or thwarted

their desire to be converted and find reconciliation with God. In that Age a man will die only for his own sin, only because, with full knowledge and ability to choose and practice that which is right in God's sight, he nevertheless elects to remain evil for the love of it. Hence this picture in these few verses, drawn to delineate the suppression of the power of external evil so that it can no longer adversely influence or affect men against their will. In that Age it is to be true that "*they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*" (Isa. 65:25). In order to accomplish that end it is obvious that the Devil must be deprived of power to instil evil and sin into the hearts and actions of men, and this preliminary to the work of the Millennial Age logically introduces this 20th chapter.

What is this binding? Quite evidently, it is closely connected with the restraint of evil which is a feature of the Millennial Age. Rev. 20:1 indicates clearly that its fulfilment is at the beginning of that Age. This, does not necessarily mean, though, that the binding takes place simultaneously with the commencement of the Second Advent. The dragon of Rev. 20 is the last enemy of righteousness to be dealt with after the other great enemies, the "Beast" and the "False Prophet" have been cast into the Lake of Fire. Now, since Rev. 19, dealing with the warfare between the Rider on the White Horse and these two enemies, is evidently a phase of the Advent, the binding of the Dragon, coming next in order, would seem to belong to a later phase of that Advent. This binding also coincides with the commencement of the reign of the saints, and since that reign does not commence until the saints have been "changed" and the marriage of the Lamb completed, and the Lord must first come "for" his saints before the marriage feast and his subsequent revelation to the world "with" his saints, it would seem clear that the "binding of Satan" is to occur after all these things at the time of the establishment of Christ's kingdom in power in the earth. That time has not yet come.

The background is this world at that time during the course of the Second Advent when the Lord Christ, having already resurrected his Church to be associated with him in his Millennial work, has destroyed those factors in society which have stood in opposition to his assumption of power. Included in these forces are those institutions of men which are in themselves evil and have oppressed the sons of men. Under symbols of the "beast," the "false prophet," the "kings of the earth," in chapter 19, these are pictured as drawn up in battle array to contend with the Rider on the White Horse from heaven—the Lord Christ in martial guise—and they all are defeated and destroyed, their destruction being symbolised by the fiery lake. Only the dragon remains, and this 20th chapter identifies this

dragon of Revelation with the serpent of Eden and Satan the destroyer, so completing the identification. The lesser evil powers having been dealt with, and the time having come for the resurrection of the dead to experience the call to conversion and life of the new Age, it remains to deal with Satan so that the last hindering influence is removed. Hence the angel descending from heaven with a great chain in his hand is another representation of our Lord at his Second Advent, specifically as respects that aspect which has to do with the restraint of the Evil One.

From that time onward, the practice of evil will be restrained. “Nothing will hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain” (Isa. 11:9 NLT). Men will not be prevented from thinking evil thoughts or harbouring evil designs; some will yield “*feigned obedience*” (Psa. 18:44 marg.); but the power to inflict evil or harm, physical, mental or moral, upon another will be lost. We do not know how. Divine power will be exercised here in a fashion of which we have little, if any, conception today. But it will be true that although a man may formulate an intention to do evil to another, he will find himself physically or mentally unable to put that intention into effect. That restraint will operate throughout the Millennial Age.

This “binding of Satan,” that he should “deceive the nations no more,” (v.3) presupposes that he has possessed and exercised the power to deceive men and instil evil thoughts and influences into their minds during the present and past spans of human history and this supposition is confirmed by our Lord’s reference to him as the “prince of this world” and Paul’s “the god of this world.” (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4). It is this power and freedom which will be taken from Satan throughout the whole period of the Millennium and this constitutes his “binding.” His personal freedom of movement, so to speak, may not be limited any more than will be the personal freedom of evilly disposed men on earth during that Age, but he will be powerless to reach men’s minds in any way.

A glance at daily events should make it clear that the binding of Satan has not yet taken place and is not yet even in progress. The powers of evil have greater control today in earth’s affairs than they have ever had, except, perhaps, in the early days at the period of the Deluge. Many of the devices and acts of certain classes of men are characterised by a cold-blooded ferocity and disregard for human suffering which can quite literally be said to be Devil-inspired. The fearful experiences through which so many of earth’s peoples must pass are evidence that the archangel of evil is still the god of this world, and that his subjects still render him service. It is sometimes suggested that these facts are the result

of Satan's struggles to resist his binding and are evidence therefore that his binding is actually in progress. This reasoning is built upon a human conception of the binding as though the Most High finds it necessary to wage war and use the heavenly equivalent of physical force to achieve his end of rendering Satan powerless. Nothing of the sort. God is always master of the situation, and when in his wisdom the time comes for Satan to be bound and his influence restrained, one word from the Almighty and it will be done. It will not require battalions of angels drawn up in martial array, archangels in command of detachments and some spiritual equivalent of carnal weapons, with which to wage an invisible conflict with the hosts of Satan in the fashion in which men wage war today. God is omnipotent. "*He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.*" (Psa. 33:9). His ends are achieved by means of orderly development, and He permits the continuance of evil to a pre-determined limit for a wise purpose, yet when his time has come to act against evil and evil-doers, none can resist his will. So Divine power will operate from heaven to end, in one moment of time, every scrap of influence Satan has over man and spirit.

One may begin to wonder at this point just what is the attitude of Satan himself to all this. How does he regard this already well-publicised picture of his approaching doom? After a very successful career of crime, what, if any, preparation is he likely to make to resist any threat to the continuance of his present activities? What, if any, resistance *can* he offer to the omnipotent power of God? Is there any likelihood that Origen was right after all, and that eventually the Devil will abandon his evil ways and embrace righteousness? In the face of the positive statements of Scripture above referred to this would not seem likely. What perhaps is more probable is that in fact Satan, a fallen being separated from God by millenniums of sin, does not really believe in his heart that the threatened fate will ever materialise. The position is much the same with many of mankind. People today, in general, do not really believe in God. They have lost their knowledge of him, and with that any vital belief in his powers or interest in them. "If there is a God, He either does not care or has no power to put right things that are wrong in this world!" That sentiment fairly expresses the considered judgment of the natural man who has been separated from God by sin from the beginning. Yet in that beginning man knew God, walked with God, talked with God; that is clear from the Genesis story. The difference has been effected by sin. It is reasonable to think that the same principle can hold good in the case of Satan. He also had the privilege of knowing God, walking with him, talking with him, and appreciating his power. He embraced sin, and since

nothing that is of sin can stand in the Divine Presence, he too from that moment must have been banished, separated from God just as truly as was Adam. Would it be surprising, therefore, if Satan, blinded by his own sin, concludes that after all this time God is evidently unable to complete his designs, and that sin can continue indefinitely on its apparently successful course?

If this hypothesis be well founded, the great enemy of man will continue busily with his plans, waging war against all that is holy and true and lovely upon earth, unbelieving until the hour has struck. In the heyday of his dominion, attendant angels carrying out his dark orders, the cry of his suffering prisoners going up to heaven, his power will vanish as one snaps off the electric light. Suddenly he will find himself bereft of power, of influence, of servants, of an empire—alone. Too late, he will realise that the omnipotence of God has waited for this moment, and that his long course of rebellion against his Creator, with all its terrible consequences for humanity, has ended.

Can one picture that lonely spirit through all the thousand years of earth's jubilee? Free to roam through the vast spaces of God's creation, free to observe, to meditate, to scheme, but powerless to affect or influence in any way the mind or the heart of the weakest or humblest of God's creatures. Seeing all, hearing all, unable to interfere, the seal of Divine authority marks him out and sets him apart like Cain, an outcast, an exile, one upon whom is the judgment of God. He may translate himself out of our material universe into that spiritual sphere which is beyond the scope of human sense or understanding, and wander through the celestial land as alone and remote from the presence of God as when he presided over earth's destinies. He may come back into our world of time and space to find the thousand years of restitution still in progress, but wherever he goes and whatever he does, Satan will be bound, altogether unable to interfere further in the plans of God for his creation.

Strangely, this is not the end. One might expect that, having destroyed the power of Satan in the world and established a rule of righteousness in which evil finds no place, God would ensure that there will be no revival of sin, by executing the penalty of sin—death—upon this arch-rebel against him. But no; he is bound, restrained, impotent to do evil, for the thousand years, but he lives still. God has not taken away his life. Further, at the end of the Millennium he is to be loosed again, set free to resume his evil work among men, if then he will. Of this "loosing" it is necessary to speak guardedly, for the statement appears in only one text of Scripture,

Rev. 20:7, and the words are vague and obscure. (*See the article "The Little Season"*) A little thought, however, seems to indicate that this final "loosing" is logical and in harmony with the general principles of the Divine Plan. All of mankind are to have such an opportunity to decide for good or evil after they have witnessed and experienced, during that last thousand years, the benefits of universal adherence to the righteous laws of God and full loyalty to him. The "spirits, in prison," those rebellious angels who fell from their high estate in the days before the Flood (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Gen. 6), and have since that day been under a form of restraint witnessing the evil that has come upon the world, will in that Age have the same opportunity as men to repent, and convert, and be reconciled to God. (1 Cor. 6:3). Is it not logical and in keeping with the known character of God, who is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pet. 3:9), that Satan himself should at least be treated similarly, and have the same opportunity after seeing for himself the results of the Messianic reign of righteousness? Is this "loosing" in fact an opportunity for him to demonstrate whether, after all that he has seen, he may yet, at the eleventh hour, repent of his evil deeds? If he should so repent, it must be that, despite his evil deeds, God would receive him.

There are, though, three prophetic Scriptures which seem to indicate that the die is already cast, that the opportunity will not be taken. Here is concerned the revealed foreknowledge of God, which is something that we as human beings cannot hope to understand and into which we may not intrude. John in Rev. 20:10, after the episode of the "loosing," says that "*the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire*" which in v.14 is defined as the "second death." This is destruction, eternal death, the wages of sin. This is stated as an event that is certainly going to happen. Then Ezekiel in chap. 28 describes one under the cognomen (additional name) of the "king of Tyre" (v.12 RSV) who had been in Eden as a "protective cherub," created perfect and sinless by God, lapsed into rebellion and sin, and receives Divine condemnation. "*I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth...and never shalt thou be any more.*" (vv.18-19) Isaiah in chap. 14, under guise of a Divine declaration addressed to the "king of Babylon," (v.4) speaks of Lucifer, son of the morning, the morning star, who aspired to be equal with the Most High and to rule all creation conjointly with him but in the process "*made the world as a wilderness*" (v.17) and in consequence will be brought down to the lowest hell, the place from which there is no return. (A significant point justifying the application of these two passages to a supernatural being rather than to the kings of Tyre and Babylon is that although the kings of some peoples such as the Romans and Egyptians did identify their kings

with their gods, neither the kings of Babylon nor of Tyre ever did this; they always insisted they were the “servants” of their respective gods; the language and allusions in both passages are impossible of application to human beings.) If these three passages are to be taken as meaning what they say, the implication is that the Lord already knows that the case is, hopeless, and has revealed this knowledge “*to his servants the prophets.*”

A celebrated Anglican minister, Dr. Paterson Smyth (1852-1932), an advocate of Future Probation, laid down the maxim that it is possible for a man, continuously sinning against light, and knowing that he is sinning, to destroy his own capacity for repentance. After that there is nothing God can do, because the man is spiritually dead; there is nothing left upon which God can work. The man has committed spiritual suicide. His incorrigible antagonism to righteousness has led him to renounce the possible life which can only subsist when righteousness is accepted as the way of life. If there is anything at all in this, it illustrates how God, who knows the hearts of all his creatures, can look upon this one and know that despite the opportunity which may yet be given, he will not repent, and so sentence has to be passed. So the decree can already have gone forth, before the days of John, before the days of Ezekiel, before the days of Isaiah, to be recorded on the pages of the Book just as it is already recorded in the annals of Heaven. We do not know.

Perhaps even then, at the end of the Millennium, Satan does not really believe that “*the wages of sin is death.*” (Rom. 6:23) Blinded by his own sin, obsessed with his desire to rule at least over men as God rules over all creation, fortified in his evil ways by the forbearance of God through the ages and apparent inability or unwillingness even then to inflict the final penalty of death, perhaps there is nothing left but an irrevocable determination to fight against God. Once, a long time ago, in the beginning, he deceived Eve, saying “*ye shall not surely die.*” (Gen. 3:4) Can it be that at the end he even deceives himself? If that should in fact be the case, in face of all that he knows of the goodness and love of God, there can be only one possible end. There is a terrible finality in those words spoken through the prophet Ezekiel “*I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth... and never shalt thou be any more.*” (Ezek. 28:18-19)

AOH

In His due time angelic choirs shall sing again
 In grander strain that heavenly message,
 “Peace on earth, good will toward men!”
 And every knee shall bow, and every loving heart confess
 The Christ who comes to reign and bless!

In Due Time, Poems of Dawn

THE BIBLE'S SONG OF LOVE

Verse by verse through the Song of Songs Part 6c Chapter 8:9-8:14

All references RV unless otherwise stated

8:9 “AND IF SHE BE A DOOR, WE WILL ENCLOSE HER WITH BOARDS OF CEDAR”

i.e. if she tends toward human union (Heb. means figuratively a damsel easy of access—one whose sanctity may be violated) then under divine care she will be “boarded up” meaning figuratively, “kept within strict confines.” The Bride and Bridegroom in glory and power appear to say—“We will so watch over her that she will not be approachable to any seducer.”

These promises are the natural complement to the promises to bring Israel back to God. This national weakness of “going a whoring after other nations and gods” is to be guarded against until Israel has grown to maturity.

In the early stages of Israel’s return to favour the overtures of other nations will be her greatest danger. Israel’s independence and prosperity will then provoke the hostility of some nations. Then shall the prophecy of Ezekiel 39 be fulfilled. But when full-grown and standing firm in God’s favour the prophecy of Zech. 8:23 will be fulfilled that “men...out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

8:10 “I AM A WALL” says the Bride “AND MY BREASTS LIKE THE TOWERS THEREOF”

“In verse 10 the spouse is able to say, ‘I am a wall, and my breasts like towers.’ She can secure all that is of God in holy separation, and along with that her affections are fully developed.” (C.A.C.)

To be a wall is to be built firmly on the sure foundation laid in Zion, and to have “breasts like towers” thereof is to be filled with faith and love to Christ, and to all that belong to Christ.

These words express the sentiments of the completed “Bride class” and the recognition that a condition of maturity has been attained. “The time of her deliverance is at hand”—the time for nurturing and nourishing the children of the “Everlasting Father.” (Isa. 9:6)

“THEN WAS I IN HIS EYES AS ONE THAT FOUND PEACE.”

Oh for the blessed consciousness of having thus found favour. It seems to be the special privilege of the far advanced believer who can confidently affirm—“I am a wall, and my breasts like towers.” Then and perhaps not till then—not until we have decided evidences that we are in very deed the espoused ones of Jesus, can we secure ourselves that we have found favour in His eyes. (1 John 3:22)

“For the Kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17)

8:11 “SOLOMON HAD A VINEYARD AT BAAL-HAMON; HE LET OUT THE VINEYARD UNTO KEEPERS.”

Throughout these closing passages there recurs the note of regret that others have not responded to the privilege of living close to the Lord. Now in this verse the Bride looks back to an earlier vineyard owned by the “Lord of a multitude” (the meaning of the word Baal-hamon.) Out of the multitude of nations one only was chosen to be His vineyard—“You only have I known of all families of the earth.” (Amos 3:2)

Solomon represents our Lord throughout the Song. This association of Israel with our Lord in those far-away days gives a new significance to the words of Isa. 5:1-7 “My wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill...For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel.”

“EVERY ONE FOR THE FRUIT THEREOF WAS TO BRING A THOUSAND PIECES OF SILVER.”

This word picture illustrates in brief the relationship of God’s people under the law in contrast to that state of future blessing portrayed in Isa. 55:1 “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat...without money and...price.”

Israel was a vineyard—the vine that God brought out of Egypt (Psa. 80:8) but God sought not merely payment but fruit.

“Fruitfulness is the great end of God’s ordinance in the vegetable kingdom. Fruitfulness is the consummation of all God has done in creation, in human history and in redemption. The vine is one of the most conspicuous of plants in this connection...the vine produces a fruit whose

exceptional excess of nourishment is intended for the use of men. Some plants are grown for blossoms; some for seed, but the vine is grown for fruit alone.” (M.M.B.)

8:12 The reader can almost sense an ominous silence after verse 11, until, as the Beloved contemplates His Bride, He says “MY VINEYARD, WHICH IS MINE, IS BEFORE ME.”

These are also prophetic words for they reveal the transfer of divine favour as set out by our Lord in Matt. 21:43 when He addressed the Jews of His day with the words: “The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth *the fruits* thereof.”

This is the fifth vineyard setting in the Song. The first was unkept—“Mine own vineyard have I not kept,” the second vineyard was unguarded and the Lord warned against the “little foxes,” the third vineyard was budded, the fourth vineyard was in blossom, while the fifth was yielding fruit.

Now in an expression of ardour the Bride turns to her Beloved and says “THOU, O SOLOMON, SHALT HAVE THE THOUSAND” and then, as she recollects the present blessing that the Lord’s people themselves receive from the fruits of the spirit she adds “AND THOSE THAT KEEP THE FRUIT THEREOF TWO HUNDRED.”

“The thousand” seems to represent what is due to the Lord. It is a figure used in scripture to denote a full amount due to a king. For example David took a thousand chariots from the King of Zobah (2 Sam. 8:3-4), Menahem gave a thousand talents to the King of Assyria. (2 Kings 15:19).

Nevertheless if we produce fruit to meet our Lord’s full due He will see that we get our “two hundred.” This figure is a double tithe. God asked for one-tenth from His ancient people but to those who give Him His full due He gives double.

In these words of the Bride we have the final expressions of personal yieldedness and affection. They represent the sentiments of those who have come to see that all that she is (7:12-13) all the service she can render (8:10), and all her possessions (8:12) are only possible because she belongs wholly to Christ.

The Song now draws to its close with words of touching significance for, alas, we are more prone to speak *of* Him to others, than *to* Himself; more

prone to bring our burdens and sorrows, and joys and hopes, anxieties, experiences and fears to the “companions” than to Jesus and so He says:

8:13 “THOU THAT DWELLEST IN THE GARDENS, THE COMPANIONS HEARKEN FOR THY VOICE: CAUSE ME TO HEAR IT.”

Do we observe that He speaks of gardens in the plural. “There are other gardens in the Song. In the fourth chapter the Bride is compared to an enclosed garden; in the fifth chapter the Beloved comes into His garden... and in the last chapter is dwelling in the gardens with her beloved. Five gardens...” (MMB)

His first request (2:14) was that she should let Him hear her voice. It is His closing request also.

To speak *of* Him is one thing, to speak *to* Him is another. Service can never take the place of communion; rather every service should be the result of fresh communion. In such a day of confusion and rush, how we need to pause and let our Beloved Bridegroom “hear our voice”—not merely in petition, but in worship and praise.

And what does she say in reply?

8:14 “MAKE HASTE, MY BELOVED, AND BE THOU LIKE TO A ROE OR TO A YOUNG HART UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF SPICES.”

Her immediate response is “Make haste.”

It is beautiful to note that the very last utterance of the Bride is in the form of a plea to the Bridegroom for His intimate presence. *Is it so with us?* The Bride could enjoy lovely *thoughts* of the Bridegroom, but she could not be really satisfied until she could *be with him*.

“upon the mountain of spices”

See note on 2:17

Thine alone am I, beloved; rests thy love on me,
 Not a spot of sin or failure, beautiful in thee,
 Dressed in robes of virgin whiteness, fearless now I come,
 Drawn by love which leads me upward to my only home.

Oh, to hear thy voice beloved, 'Rise and come away'—
 Thou art longing, I am watching for that bridal day;
 Then to dwell with thee forever, storms of sorrow past,
 My beloved and I together, while all ages last.'

V. Reeson

And so the Bride brings to a close this spiritual Song of Love ending with the same plea as that on which the last page of scripture closes—"EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS" (Rev. 22:20 KJV) "MAKE HASTE, MY BELOVED."

May it be our prayer too.

EEA/LB

OUR lamps are trimmed and burning,
 Our robes are white and clean,
 We've tarried for the Bridegroom,
 And now we'll enter in.
 We know we've nothing worthy
 That we can call our own—
 The light, the oil, the robes we wear,
 Are all from Him alone.

*Chorus—
 Behold, behold the Bridegroom!
 And all may enter in,
 Whose lamps are trimmed and burning,
 Whose robes are white and clean.*

Go forth—we soon shall see Him,
 The way is shining now,
 All lighted with a glory
 None other could bestow.
 His gracious invitation
 Beyond deserving kind,
 We gladly own and take our lamps,
 And joy eternal find.

We see the marriage splendour,
 Within the open door;
 We know that those who enter
 Are blest for evermore;
 We see our King, more lovely
 Than all the sons of men;
 We haste because that door once shut,
 Will never ope again.

*George F. Root (1820-1895)
 Bible Students Hymnal*

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THIS, TOO, WILL PASS

*Poor heart, break not, though cruel be thy wound, —
 This, too, will pass!*

*The weariest day will end in sunset light,
 And dawn must follow e'en the darkest night!*

*Nor drink too deeply of joy's honeyed cup, —
 This, too, will pass!
 Caressing hands will lose their loving touch,
 And words mean nothing, that once meant so much.*

*Ah, then, whate'er thy state, see thou content, —
 This will not pass!*

*Thy rest in God, He only knows and cares,
 His heart of love thine every sorrow shares!*

*Gertrude W. Seibert
 Poems of the Way*

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