

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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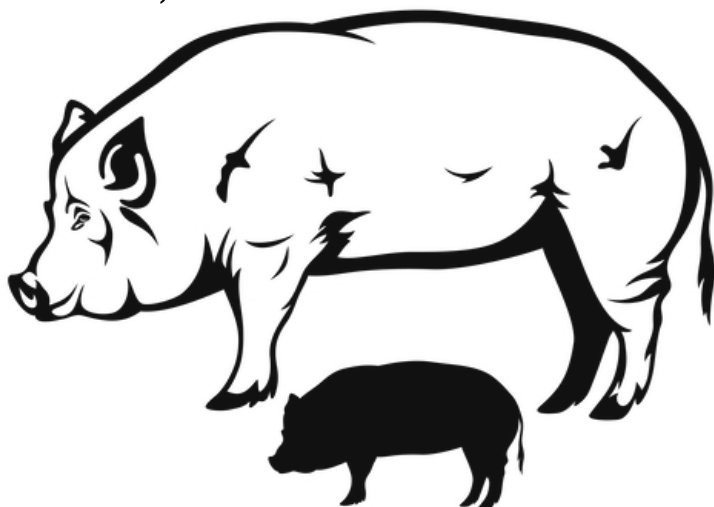
May / June 2024

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Do not throw your pearls in  
front of pigs—they will only  
trample them underfoot.

(Matt. 7:6 GNT)



# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

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

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

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Pork is a major source of protein in Northwest Europe. According to the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board sales of pork are worth £4.5bn in the U.K. and about 11.2 million pigs are slaughtered in the U.K. annually. We are 62.5% self-sufficient in pork. Many a child has been sent to school on a cooked breakfast with bacon and or a sausage as well as adults. A cooked breakfast is a mainstay of a guest house or hotel in the holidays and roast pork is popular for Sunday lunch.

However most people are aware the Old Testament states pork is "unclean" and should not be eaten. (Lev. 11:7) What a terrible occasion it was when Antiochus Epiphanes slaughtered a pig on God's altar in Jerusalem in the second century B.C. What a great disrespect to God's laws.

The climate here in Britain is much colder and with modern methods with food such as smoking, refrigeration and freezing, pork is safe to eat if cooked thoroughly. Further than that both Peter and Paul showed pork was no longer to be "unclean." (Acts 10:15; Rom. 14:14,17)

In the time of Jesus' first advent pigs were still unclean. In Luke 15 the prodigal son left his father's house with his inheritance given to him early. The son dissipated his money and life so much outside the land of Israel that he was forced to work on a Gentile farm looking after another man's pigs who were fed better than he was. Working with swine and eating what was fed to pigs showed the degradation and humiliation of the

situation his choices had led him to. The parable ends with him running back to his father who welcomes him back home.

Here when we think of animals in fields we generally think of sheep safely grazing in green fields and lambs in the spring or cattle grazing in similar fields to produce milk and dairy products or beef for food. Pigs on the contrary when seen in the fields seem to be in muddy paddocks. Peter (2 Pet. 2:22) might have had such a vision in mind when he said about pigs wallowing in mud after they had been cleaned. The lesson being for the Christian not to return to their former sinful ways and unbelief.

Pigs were used by Jesus to heal the man who was possessed by demons. It was in Gadara an area to the east of the Jordan near the sea of Galilee. It seemed that Jewish farmers were farming pigs to sell to the Gentiles. Was that the reason why pigs were used? However one good outcome was the man was cured and became a believer and no doubt was a good witness of Jesus in his home area.

The scripture on the front cover from Matthew's gospel is about not casting pearls before swine. Pearls are of great value in terms of beauty so much so they are a commodity like gold that holds it's own value. It would be even more so then as imitation pearls were not produced in that day. Animals are unable to value commodities. (They would appear as little stones or pebbles and would be ignored as they could not be eaten which is one interest an animal has, food.) To the Christian the gospel has great value as well as beauty. To some of those listening it would have been like jewels before an animal. The Christian appreciates the gospel like a person appreciates jewels. This will not always be the case. In the times of restitution of all things all will have an opportunity to know the Lord and to understand the gospel.



### **Total Commitment**

A chicken and a pig were passing by a church and heard the beautiful choral singing. Said the chicken to the pig, "That was beautiful! Let's show our appreciation by giving them a good ham and egg breakfast." Replied the pig, "For you, that may be *sacrifice*; for me, that is *total commitment*."

*Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook*

## THE ATTITUDE OF STEPHEN

*“Out of the abundance of the heart his (the) mouth speaks.”* (Luke 6:45 RSV)

“The tenor of the life decides the crisis of the moment.”

In these days, when the Lord’s dear ones are hourly in contact with a diseased world, and the danger of infection is truly great, it is refreshing and pleasant as well as pleasing to the Lord, to turn our minds to a contemplation of beautiful things, holy lives, Christ-like characters.

Amongst the anthology of such individuals in God’s Word, the beloved Stephen surely has a place. Stephen was a man of well-balanced attributes. He had knowledge, and was sober with it; he had love for the Lord, and knew how to put it into practical service; he had faith, but not blind faith. He followed his Lord to the end, bearing erect the banner of Love, Meekness and Purity, and when his adversaries, by corrupting justice, resorted to brute force in a vain effort to nullify his holy influence, he quietly gave up his life as being quite secondary to his loving allegiance to the Master. Did his enemies show up favourably when all was done? Did they succeed in their aims, and was Stephen a hopeless failure in his? Think on the brief account of his experiences in Acts 6 and 7.

The early church chose seven men of their assembly to attend to the more temporal duties in their organisation, in order to relieve the apostles for their office of spiritual administration. Stephen was amongst those chosen; indeed, he heads the list, and is the only one mentioned with a commendation. It is stated that he was chosen as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 6:5) Compared with the Church, the other six could not have been lacking in faith and the Holy Spirit, yet Stephen is given an honourable mention as being *full* of these things. From the record it is evident that he was in every way fitted to be an apostle, but he used his office as deacon to the great benefit of the Gospel. *“The message of God extended; and in Jerusalem the number of disciples greatly increased; besides which, very many of the priests were subdued to the faith. Stephen especially, full of active benevolence, produced great and wonderful evidences for the people.”* (Acts 6:7-8, Ferrar Fenton) Representatives of other sects from throughout the Eastern Mediterranean countries debated with him, but *“were not able to withstand the intelligence and the spirit with which he spoke.”* (v.10 FF) As a result of this, they bribed other men to accuse him of blasphemy.

This was one of the things that happened at Jesus' trial. (Matt. 26:60-65) And the same sort of thing is happening to his people today. We are daily being called upon to stand out from the activities of the misguided world, and make our position clear to men. One of the effects of standing, without compromise, firmly and faithfully for Christ's principles of love and gentleness, is that our light must inevitably shine, and as the light cannot dwell with darkness it is the object of great annoyance, jealousy and hatred with some types of men. This narrow-minded spirit begets prejudice; prejudice calls forth undue criticism; exaggerated reports of distorted facts reach other ears, and even trumped-up charges are levelled at the individual Christian. This is, of course, extremely encouraging, for it is one of the indications that we are on the right road to our goal, for he who would live godly must expect to suffer persecution, and "*if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.*" (1 Pet. 3:14) But these experiences can be very wearying to the strongest of us, especially when they continue for some considerable time. We thank our loving Heavenly Father that his strength is made perfect in our weakness; that "*He knoweth our frame; and He remembereth that we are dust.*" (Psa. 103:14) He, as it were, puts his hand upon us, tender and careful to us, yet strong in protection from our spiritual enemies, and, seeing it with the eye of faith we are enabled to feel peace within and reflect peace without, instead of returning enmity and strife to our accusers. To the council of the Sanhedrin, who had been intently watching Stephen during the bitter outburst of his antagonists, his face appeared as if it had been that of an angel. (v.15)

*Blest be the man whose heart belongs to God;  
Whose way is guided by his powerful Arm.  
His lot is peace, and 'mid earth's seething strife  
His heart is still, beneath God's tranquil calm,  
And all is quiet within. A wondrous quiet—  
A quiet from which God's thoughts can emanate.  
A deep, deep quiet, bequeathed by God himself,  
Which means a great deal more than worldly wealth.  
It means his mind is free to think of God—  
To understand him and his careful Love.  
It helps him fix his mind on things above,  
And so he grows, alike to God's dear Son,  
And with his help, the race to victory run.*

Stephen's reply to the council was uncompromising and clear. In it, we suggest, was a perfect example of full consecration to the Lord. He did not attempt to defend himself, but valued neither his life nor the opinion of

men to let it hinder the passage of the Holy Spirit through him. He was *filled with the Holy Spirit*, and it was reflected in the words he spoke.

As a thought to ponder on as we go our way, how much do we owe to Stephen for the great ministry of the Apostle Paul, who, as Saul of Tarsus, stood and witnessed his martyrdom, no doubt thinking hard the while.

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## ATTITUDE

It is impossible to grow in grace if we have hardening of the attitudes.

The man who takes the world philosophically can never be permanently beaten.

*Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook*



## WHEN PIGS ATTACK

*“Do not give what is holy to the dogs;  
nor cast your pearls before swine,  
lest they trample them under their feet,  
and turn and tear you in pieces.”* (Matthew 7:6 NKJV)

This verse is rendered thus by numerous translators and theologians, in which line 3 makes no sense [if it concerns pigs] and presents Jesus as knowing little or nothing about animals. Pigs do, as part of their nature, “*trample*” things in the mud under their feet, but when was the last time you heard of pigs “*turning*” on someone and “*rending*” or “*tearing*” them? Most readers, unable to make sense of this, simply shrug their shoulders and move on.

Thus, seemingly, line 1 is about dogs, and lines 2,3,4 are about pigs. Most translations punctuate the verse this way, although a very few do manage to give the correct thought. It seems that scholarly translators are mostly unaware of the “figure of speech” being utilized here.

What is a “figure of speech”? It is not slang, nor street language, but definite rules. We are familiar with some of them, such as parenthesis, ellipses [...], and quotation.

“A figure is simply a word or a sentence thrown into a peculiar form, different from its original or simplest meaning or use. Bible translators have, through inattention to figures of speech, made blunders as serious as they are foolish. Sometimes they have translated the figure

literally, totally ignoring its existence...sometimes they have taken literal words and translated them figuratively. Commentators and interpreters, from inattention to the figures, have been led astray from the real meaning of many important passages of God's Word.

“A figure is, as we have before said, a departure from the natural and fixed laws of Grammar or Syntax; but it is a departure not arising from ignorance or accident. Figures are not mere mistakes of Grammar; on the contrary, they are legitimate departures from law, for a special purpose. They are permitted variations with a particular object... Therefore they are limited as to their number, and can be ascertained, named, and described... Many misunderstood and perverted passages are difficult, only because we have not known the Lord's design in the difficulty.”

[Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, E. W. Bullinger]

Let us begin with parallelisms. These are very common in the Psalms and prophets of the Hebrew O.T., and to a lesser extent in the Greek N.T. While there are various forms of parallelisms, the basic concept is that a thought is presented in lines 1,2 and then repeated [using different words] in lines 3,4.

### **Parallelisms**

Hosea 6:2 a. After two days  
 b. will he revive us:  
 a. in the third day  
 b. he will raise us up...

Isaiah 1:18 a. though your sins be as scarlet,  
 b. they shall be as white as snow;  
 a. though they be red like crimson,  
 b. they shall be as wool.

Matthew 10:27 a. What I tell you in darkness,  
 b. *that* speak ye in light:  
 a. and what ye hear in the ear,  
 b. *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

Simple enough; no need for confusion here. But then we come to a slightly more complex arrangement, the inverted parallelisms, in which lines 1,4 are related and lines 2,3 are related. They are not to be read sequentially.

## Inverted Parallelisms

Isaiah 5:7 a. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts

b. *is* the house of Israel,

b. and the men of Judah

a. his pleasant plant...

Mark 2:27 a. The sabbath

b. was made for man,

b. and not man

a. for the sabbath:

This type of inverted parallelism is what is found in our original text, and it should properly be rendered thusly:

a. *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs;*

*b. nor cast your pearls before swine,*

*b. lest they trample them under their feet,*

*a. and [the dogs] turn and tear you in pieces.”* [Matt. 7:6 NKJV]

Lines 1,4 [a, a] should be read together first; lines 2,3 [b, b] should be read together next. If this is done, then the meaning of the text becomes clear. Thus, we could read:

Do not give what is holy to the dogs, lest they turn and tear you in pieces.

Nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet.

There are a few translations that actually do render the text in this manner, such as the CEV and GNT. Otherwise, most translators seem oblivious to the inverse parallelism.

“Do not give what is holy to dogs—they will only turn and attack you. Do not throw your pearls in front of pigs—they will only trample them underfoot.” (GNT)

One Bible commentator, at least, has the correct thought:

“This verse furnishes a beautiful instance of what has been called the ‘introverted parallelism.’ The usual mode of poetry among the Hebrews, and a common mode of expression in proverbs and apothegms, was by the parallelism, where one member of a sentence answered to another, or expressed substantially the same sense with some addition or modification...Sometimes this was alternate, and sometimes it was introverted—where the first and fourth lines would correspond, and the second and third. This is the case here. The dogs would tear, and not the swine; the swine would trample the pearls



under their feet, and not the dogs.” (Barnes)

Here is an example of a N.T. possible inverted parallelism that is widely misunderstood.

*“Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.”* (Revelation 20:7-8 NKJV)

Most intuitively feel that the nations, whose *“number is as the sand of the sea,”* are the righteous billions of the resurrected human race at the end of the Kingdom age—and not the deceived ones. But this passage is written in such a way that it can be difficult to interpret properly. Will billions, after 1,000 years of training in righteousness, still have personal characters that are evil and undeveloped, like unto those of Gog and Magog, and thus be deceived? No, we answer, that cannot be.

Once it is seen that this is an inverted parallelism, the meaning becomes clear. The billions are not those deceived by Satan; his deceived followers will be a tiny minority. God’s plan of salvation for the human race will be a resounding success.

This is an inverted parallelism, a-b-b-a, with a-a read first and b-b read last. Thus—

a - Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth,

b - Gog and Magog,

b - to gather them [who might be deceived] together to battle,

a - whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Another misunderstood example is Amos 9:13:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,

*that the plowman shall overtake the reaper,*

*and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed...”*

Lines 2,3 are considered, almost intuitively as a parallelism. Thus, a typical interpretation of line 2 is that the *“plowman”* of the great *“Time of Trouble”* shall overtake the harvesting *“reaper,”* and put a stop to that work. But, what about line 3? Is it really like line 2, but using different words?

Very seldom do you hear anything about the “*treader of grapes*,” and the one that “*soweth seed*.” The thought might be given that the “*treader of grapes*” is about the same as the “*plowman*” [i.e., “*Time of Trouble*”], and this “*treader*” overtakes the one “*sowing seed*.”

But there is a problem about visualizing what the prophet is literally describing. We might be able to visualize a “*plowman*” overtaking a “*reaper*” in the same field. But how can we visualize a “*treader of grapes*” [in a wine vat] overtaking a “*sower of seed*” in a field somewhere? If we cannot visualize the literal, then how can we even begin to make a figurative interpretation?

When it is seen that this is an inverted parallelism, then the difficulty vanishes, and we have the following:

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD*

*a. that the plowman*

*b. shall overtake the reaper,*

*b. and the treader of grapes [shall be overtaken by]*

*a. him that soweth seed...*

Lines b-b go together, since both are harvest related. Lines a-a also go together, as both of them are activities at the beginning of the new agricultural cycle.

What we have in this prophecy is a statement of *abundant harvests*—so much so, that they are still reaping grain and treading grapes for the year just past, when it is already time for plowing and planting work to begin for the next agricultural year. This is a picture of the Kingdom and its abundant blessings. This is *not* about the “*Time of Trouble*” at the end of this age.

So, we need to be careful students of God’s word, rightly dividing it. If some view seems weird or mysterious, it is likely not being understood correctly.

“*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJV)

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Growl all day and you’ll be dog-tired by night.

*Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook*

## DANIEL IN BABYLON

### 15. Until The End Be

There is something heart-rendingly tragic in the spectacle of an old man deprived, at the last, of the fruits of that for which he has laboured zealously and perseveringly through a long life. It happens in everyday affairs and Christians are not immune; it happened to stalwart men of God in Old Testament days. Moses led the children of Israel forty years through the wilderness toward the promised Land, but he was destined to behold that fair goal only with his eyes and never himself to set foot in it. Samuel, serving his God and his country from childhood to old age, welded a disorganised rabble of tribesmen into a nation, gave them a rule of justice and organised government, and died in obscurity leaving the fruits of his work to be reaped by King David. The aged priest Simeon, leader of the tiny band that in the days just prior to the first Advent “looked for redemption (deliverance) in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38) lived just long enough to take the Babe in his old arms; but he was laid aside in death before the glory of the Messiah was revealed to the believing in Israel. So it was with Daniel. Taken from his home in early youth, he lived his whole life in an alien land, passionately looking forward to the day when God would relent and set the captives free, restoring again the glories of the beloved city—but when at last the time did come he must perforce; like Moses, see his fellows go with rejoicing into the promised land, knowing that he could never go with them. Daniel had done more than any man to keep alive the knowledge of God and hope in His promise; he had interceded with God on behalf of his people; in political life he probably did much to make the Return possible, but he himself was left out of its restoration. Two years after the Restoration, we find him still in Babylon, quite definitely now waiting for the end. Daniel was one of those of whom the writer to the Hebrews afterwards spoke when he said, “these all, having obtained (received) a good report through faith, received not the promise.” (11:39) Like many another faithful warrior for God, he was laid aside to await his reward in a better day.

Two years after the capture of Babylon by the Medes came the Restoration. The Median dynasty was at an end; in Cyrus, the Persian dynasty began. The change was marked by an unexpected toleration of all the subject peoples’ native religions; the favour shown the Jewish captives in allowing them to revive the Judean state and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem was only one of several such concessions granted by the Persian king to the varied peoples under his rule. Clay tablets of Cyrus have been discovered in which he speaks of his intention to rebuild

various of the idolatrous Temples in much the same language that he used in his famous decree to the Jews as recorded in the chapter of Ezra. (Ezra 1:2-4; 5:13)

Daniel must have seen the jubilant company set off for Judah with mixed feelings. There would have been quiet joy that at last the promise of God was fulfilled and the Captivity was ended; the Temple was to be rebuilt and the worship of God in his own city restored. But there was something lacking; the throne of the Lord was not to be established in Jerusalem and no king of David's line would sit in regal power on Mount Zion. Zerubbabel, of the line of David and legal heir to the throne, was leader of the Restoration only by appointment of Cyrus and he was nothing more than the Persian governor of Jerusalem, responsible to Cyrus for the good behaviour of the people. Joshua of the sons of Aaron was the legitimate High Priest and fully authorised to administer the rites of his sacred office, but even with the Temple rebuilt there was still a vital deficiency; the Ark of the Covenant was not there and the Most Holy was empty. This is not the real triumph of Israel; Daniel must have reflected sadly as the joyous shouts died away and the long procession disappeared in the distance. There was still much to transpire before the good promises of God can be fulfilled. So he betook himself again to study and prayer that he might continue as a faithful vehicle of the Holy Spirit in making known to the sons of men the things that God purposed to do.

Life in Babylon went on much as before. The pioneers away in Jerusalem attacked their task with enthusiasm at first and then drifted away to their own interests and the building of the Temple was neglected. Not much news got back to Babylon for communications were slow and difficult, and in any case most of the Jews who remained in Babylon had done so because they were not greatly interested in the rebuilding of Judea. They had mostly been born in Babylon and the land of Judah was a foreign and unknown country to them. Daniel probably had little in common with the Babylonian Jews; they were not his kind: but there were almost certainly a few remaining in the city whose hearts were in Judea but whose circumstances for one reason or another forbade their participating in the Return and with these Daniel would have found a common bond of interest and friendship. So for two years more he studied and pondered until at last another and a final revelation of God's future purposes was impressed upon his mind.

He was in the country, on the bank of the River Tigris, when he saw the vision. The Tigris flows at its nearest, some twenty or so miles from

Babylon and it is evident that for some reason Daniel had either temporarily or permanently left the city. It might be that he possessed a country retreat at that spot and had gone there to meditate quietly during the three weeks of mental stress to which he refers in Chapter 10. Perhaps, on the other hand, he had for the last time retired from the active administration of affairs of state—he was now about ninety years of age—and had secluded himself in some quiet country or river-side spot calmly to await his end. At any rate it was by the swiftly flowing waters of the river which divided Babylonia from Persia that he perceived the glorious angel descending to meet him and was struck speechless and helpless before the magnificence of that glory.

Ezekiel tells of seeing such a vision; so does Isaiah. Saul of Tarsus had the same experience, on the Damascus road. The fact that such manifestations are not the lot of Christians today is no argument against their reality to those faithful men of old time who did see them, nor the verity of their accounts. Something more than the natural sense of sight is necessary and all men do not possess that something more. The men with Saul of Tarsus saw nothing; it is significant though that a nameless fear seized upon them and they ran and hid themselves. The young man with Elisha could not see what the prophet saw; Heaven's forces passing and repassing on the mountains around them for their protection, until Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened. Sights of heavenly things can only be impressed upon the human mind by the Holy Spirit, and only Spirit-filled men can be receptive to spiritual things. *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Cor. 2:14) We in this modern materialistic Age are ourselves so cumbered with material thoughts and preoccupations of all kinds that we cannot so easily, as could Daniel in his quiet retreat and the intensity of his communion with God, lend ourselves to be vehicles of the Holy Spirit.

It is not uncommon, though, in this our day, for watchers around the bed of a dying Christian to catch a few whispered words or glimpse a sudden look in the failing eyes, as though the departing one had suddenly seen some wonderfully glorious vista of which the watchers had no consciousness. It may well be that as the material things slip rapidly away in the last few moments of earthly life the Holy Spirit finds more abundant entrance into a mind that has always been a sanctuary of that Spirit, and sights such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and even Saul perceived, appear plainly revealed to the inner consciousness.

Gabriel's message covers the whole of Chapter 11 and part of Chapter 12.

It is readily recognised as an outline of world events which in Daniel's day were still future but which must be accomplished before the final deliverance of Israel. Very little of it could have been intelligible to Daniel; there is still much of it which, while intelligible to us today, is nevertheless so obscure that there are a great variety of interpretations. The first four verses of Chapter 11 are obvious enough to us; they briefly describe the passing of the Persian empire and the coming of the Greeks, the "belly and thighs of brass" (Dan. 2:32) of Nebuchadnezzar's dream image and the leopard of Daniel's earlier vision. That much was probably plain to him. The remainder goes off into a long catalogue of "wars and rumours of wars" in which the most definite factor is the climax, the coming of Christ at his Second Advent, pictured by the standing up of Michael the Archangel for the salvation of Israel. That, at least, must have been quite understandable to Daniel, but the long record of happenings which had to transpire first must have led him to realise as never before that many years were yet to pass before the great deliverance could come. It might well be that in this message Daniel realised the great truth that God will save Israel and all mankind, "whosoever will" not by patching up this very unsatisfactory present world, but by a resurrection from the dead to a new world, a world in which God himself makes all things new. That is the clear implication of Chapter 12.

One wonders how this detailed and extremely lengthy statement of things to come got recorded. Daniel listened to all that Gabriel had to say but the circumstances of the interview, the grandeur and solemnity of the occasion, entirely preclude any idea that he wrote it down at the time. We must here allow for the influence of the Holy Spirit, quickening Daniel's mind after the angel had left him, so that he remembered accurately every word and compiled a complete transcript of all that had been said.

So the failing hand of the old man traced the record of his last revelation. That it was to be for the benefit of future generations he no longer had any doubt. "*I am come*" Gabriel had told him "*to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.*" (Dan. 10:14) Therein lies a great principle of Divine revelation. Anxious as we may be to witness in our own time the fulfilment of "all things written" we must realise, as Daniel was led to realise, that God's timescale is not as ours. We can study the prophetic Scriptures and witness the signs of the times with ardent zeal and heart-felt longing, but the best and most scrupulous of our conclusions cannot take into account all that is in the mind of God; only that which He has revealed, and He does not reveal all. Countless earnest Christians in past ages have been persuaded

that Bible prophecy and contemporary events have joined together to point unerringly to their own time as the day of Divine intervention in human history for the final battle between good and evil; and none have actually witnessed the climax. But it will not be always thus. The time must surely come when the last generation of watchers has had revealed to it the last hidden secrets of God's design. Then the Clock of Ages will strike twelve.

It behoves us all to be as sure of our faith and as fervent in our expectation as was Daniel, and others like him. To live as though the end will come tomorrow, and yet be prepared to live out the span of natural life to extreme old age, undisturbed in faith and hope whether the outward signs point to the one or the other eventuality; that is the faith of Daniel and the faith God wants in us. "*Though it tarry*" cried Habakkuk "*wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*" (Hab. 2:3) So many in modern times have made shipwreck of their faith because of the failure of expectations. They could wait ten years, twenty years, thirty years, for the Kingdom, but they could not wait a lifetime. But the Creator had waited through the entire span of human history and has never deviated one iota from that challenging statement of faith both in himself and in man whom He made, uttered more than three thousand years ago, as truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory. (Num. 14:21) The thoughtful Christian, viewing as dispassionately as he can the insane world in which he must perforce live today, might be pardoned for thinking that the present order cannot possibly survive the next few years. If he is right, and the end of this Age is that much near, all Christians and all right-thinking people everywhere have cause, knowingly, for rejoicing, for that climax means the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in manifest power over the nations. It means the end of cruelty and hate and injustice and oppression. It means the fulfilment of the inspired words of Zephaniah "*For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent.*" (Zeph. 3:9) It means the time when "*The Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him...He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.*" (Isa. 40:10-11) It means the realisation of words spoken to John on Patmos "*Behold, the tabernacle (dwelling-place) of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and 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. 21:3-4) It means that every faithful Christian will live and reign with

Christ for the thousand years, the while the *“ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads...and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* (Isa. 35:10)

That is what it means if the world does perish by its own hand in our own time. And if not, if the evil vitality of this old order of things prolongs its life for a season and time, the end will still be the same and just as sure, for it is written in the purposes of God and will surely come to pass. Like Daniel, we may have to wait longer than we expect and longer than we wish, but *“it will surely come; it will not tarry.”* (Hab. 2:3)

AOH

### O, PRODIGAL, RETURN!

“RETURN, return! thy Father’s voice is pleading,  
 Tho’ far astray, I bid thee turn again!  
 Thy robe is rent, thy tender feet are bleeding,  
 Thy heart is faint and sick with famine pain:  
 Return, My child: a welcome here awaits thee:  
 No longer in the distant country rove;  
 Resist the cruel tempter that belates thee,  
 And keeps thee from My dwelling and My love.”

Return, return! Thy Father’s loving-kindness  
 Thou long hast scorned, and done His grace despite;  
 Yet in His touch is healing for thy blindness,  
 And He can turn thy darkness into light.  
 Return in all thy rags of sin’s defilement;  
 Return with all thy want and sore distress;  
 Thy Father’s voice bespeaks His reconciliation:  
 Flee to thy Savior, and thy guilt confess.

Return, return! Thy substance hath been wasted—  
 Thou hast not aught to bring but thy poor heart;  
 Yet art thou longing for the bread once tasted.  
 And for His paths of peace, and faith’s good part?  
 Return, for why shouldst thou delay the pardon  
 Thy Father’s great compassion waits to grant!  
 Arise and go, before thy doubts shall harden  
 The homesick yearnings of the penitent.

*Continued page 102*

How to distinguish demon possession and demon obsession and how they differ from one another. When the devil attacks the body of a human being from the outside, we call this obsession. When, however, the evil spirit assumes control of a human soul from within, we call that possession. \*

*John Hardon*





## THE GADARENE SWINE

An incident in Jesus' life



The story of the Gadarene swine who were possessed by a legion of demons and in consequence drowned in the lake is an interesting sidelight upon the general Scriptural presentation regarding the "fallen angels." The incident itself is well attested, having been recorded by all three synoptic writers in Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-34. The three narratives agree in all main points except that Matthew declares there were two demoniacs involved and the others tell of only one. The probable explanation is that two men were in fact concerned but one became the centrepiece of the incident and the demons spoke only through this one.

This short note will not touch upon the general subject of demon obsession\*, which would require much more space for anything like adequate treatment. It will merely be remarked that according to the New Testament it was a very real thing, and trained observers in this present century have come across cases in their own experience where it has been a very real thing also. It is not suggested therefore, that the unfortunate victims in this incident were simply cases of epilepsy or psychological unbalance. Their brains were in sober fact under the control of malevolent spirit creatures, angelic beings living in a state of active rebellion against God and only deterred from their evil course by such restraints as God placed and enforced.

The wider view of this matter is well known to students of the Old Testament. There has been at some remote past time a rebellion against God and righteousness by certain of the angelic creation, which rebellion was dramatically arrested by the Most High at the time of the Noahic Deluge. The story in Genesis 6, coupled with various New Testament allusions affords a sufficiently detailed picture of what happened. The angels concerned, already in a state of rebellion, "*kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation*" to use Jude's words, (v.6) and after materialising into physical bodies lived a lawless life as men upon earth. The Flood came and thereafter they were deprived of the power thus to materialise again, but at the same time were excluded from the spiritual world which is the place of the Divine throne (see Jude 6, 1 Pet. 3:19-20 and 2 Pet. 2:4). The history of witchcraft and spiritism through the ages since, has been largely the history of these rebellious spirits endeavouring to break through the restraints that have bound them, and continue their evil ways. Hence, these two men, like so many before and since, having at

some time or other, willingly given themselves over to the influence of the evil spirits, found their brains so controlled by them that they no longer had any will-power or volition of their own. Outwardly they manifested all the characteristics of incurable and violent insanity; but the insanity was not the result of a physically diseased brain. It was due to the operation of many supernatural intelligences—a “legion” we are told in the accounts—all working simultaneously on the one human organism.

This was the state of the crazed wretch who met Jesus as He walked up from the shore of the lake. The local inhabitants would be keeping their distance; the madman had been kept habitually manacled but such was his demoniac strength that he continually broke free from his fetters and did quite a lot of damage before he could be overpowered and restrained again. He appears at this time to have been free and the impression given is that he rushed upon Jesus immediately the latter had stepped ashore from the boat. Perhaps there was in the madman’s dark mind some glimmering realisation that here was the means of deliverance from his fearful plight if only he could get near to the Man of Nazareth. But to speak of his own volition was evidently beyond his power. When his lips did move, the words were controlled by the evil influences that possessed his mind and they were words not of pleading but of resentment. *“What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”* (Matt. 8:29 NKJV)

Now that is a most important statement in Christian theology *“before the time.”* What means this frank avowal, first of Jesus’ Divinity and Messiahship at a time when his own friends and followers had not as yet realised the fact, and second of the fact that a future judgment awaited them but that the time had not yet come? “Torment” in all three narratives is *“basanizo,”* which means trial and testing and judgment as well as the execution of the consequent sentence. These evil angels, speaking through this crazed man’s lips, admitted their knowledge that the Man before whom they stood was indeed the Son of God and tacitly admitted his authority over them. They admitted their realisation that judgment and sentence upon their evil course had yet to be passed but asserted that the time was not yet. In short, they accused Jesus of coming upon them for judgment before the time that had been pre-set in the Divine purposes. All of that implies that we are dealing here with definite superhuman intelligences who, despite their admitted evil, did possess some detailed knowledge of the Divine Plan.

The Apostle Paul had some such knowledge when, twenty years or so

later, he told some of his disciples that, if faithful, they were destined to “judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:3), He was thinking of the “time” to which these referred in their question to Jesus, the Millennial “Day of Judgment” when not only evil amongst humankind but evil amongst the angelic creation is to be rooted out and all wilful evildoers, human or angelic, finally destroyed.

A significant expression in this narrative takes us back to very early times in human history. Two out of three accounts represent the evil spirits as using the expression “*the Most High God*” in referring to the Deity. “*Jesus, Son of the Most High God.*” (Luke 8:28 NKJV) It is significant because so far as men are concerned, this particular name for God dropped out of use several centuries before Christ. It seems to have been the earliest appellation by which men knew God, in its Hebrew form of “*el elyon,*” being succeeded then by *El Shaddai*, “the Almighty,” and later by the incommunicable name quite incorrectly transliterated into English by “Jehovah” but meaning “the Eternal.” These fallen angels, addressing Jesus, used the term that was current in the days that were before their restraining, the days before the Flood. It is significant that the angel who appeared to Mary at the Annunciation (Luke 1:32-35) and those who sang to the shepherds (Luke 2:14) used the same expression (Greek *hupsistos*, equal to the Hebrew *el elyon*).

So the demons, perceiving that Jesus intended to bring their domination of this unhappy man to an end, “*besought him*” according to Mark “*that He would not send them away out of the country,*” (Mark 5:10) but according to Luke “*that He would not command them to go out into the deep.*” (Luke 8:31) Be it noted there was no attempt at defiance or resistance. They recognised the authority of Jesus and would obey, but they endeavoured to get the best terms they could. In Mark, “country” is “*choras,*” meaning one’s own proper place or where one should rightfully be, hence, one’s own country. In Luke, “deep” is “*abysson,*” from which is derived the English word “abyss,” the same as the “bottomless pit” of Rev. 20:1, into which the Devil is cast for the whole period of the Millennium. Neither Mark nor Luke were present at the time; all their information must have come from one or other of those disciples who were there. It may well be that both expressions were used; the accounts are quite likely to be abbreviated and Mark may have had his information from one, and Luke from another, of the witnesses.

By the “abyss” the demons may well have meant the same thing as Peter refers to in 2 Pet. 2:4, “*God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast*

*them down to tartarus, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.*” Tartarus in Greek mythology was the prison of the Titans, who rebelled against the gods and were overthrown and imprisoned forever in a place “as far below Hades as earth is below heaven”—an apt description of the “bottomless pit” or “abyss.” It would almost seem from these and other allusions in Scripture, that these “fallen angels” are constantly seeking to evade their restraints and sometimes partially succeeding. In this case it would appear as if Jesus acceded to their request not so to use his power to return them to “Tartarus” or the abyss, but definitely to command them no longer to obsess the man. So the “legion” of spirits “*came out,*” and in the absence of any prohibition by Jesus—with his permission—they took possession of the nearest living creatures in view, a herd of swine which happened to be feeding in the vicinity.

Whether this is a unique case of demon obsession of brute beasts and just what such a thing involves we have no means of knowing. It can only be assumed that, as with the men, so with the beasts, the effect on the brain was similar to that of madness. The herd exhibited all the signs of sudden terror and panic and in a mad gallop they raced across the greensward, over a little cliff, and into the water, where they quickly drowned. Mark, with all his usual passion for descriptive detail, tells us there were about two thousand of them.

The question has often been asked; is such a proceeding in keeping with the known character of Jesus? Was it thus necessary to encompass the death of two thousand dumb creatures? In another place Jesus had said not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without the Father’s knowledge. (Matt. 10:29) We may not intrude into the Saviour’s motives for acting as He did, but we can assemble a few related facts.

How did the swine come to be there? The use of swine’s flesh was forbidden to the Jews and even though the religious observance of many had become perfunctory their inherited antipathy to swine’s flesh remained. The explanation is that the district around the sea of Galilee was largely cosmopolitan; five sizeable towns contained a considerable Greek and Roman population and there was a good demand for pork. Here in Gadara, certain not over scrupulous Jews were making a good living rearing pigs for market. The quick death by drowning of this particular herd only anticipated a much more painful death that would have been their fate a little later on. Viewed against that background, Jesus’ act was one of mercy.

But the people of the district thought otherwise. They came to Jesus and they besought him to depart. They evidently feared He would do the same to more of their herds and they were more concerned over the preservation of their vested interests than the casting out of demons from the obsessed. It is an ironic comment on the hard heartedness of mankind that whereas at first they all went in fear of the madman who infested their cities they now went in fear of the One who had delivered them from that scourge. In their eyes the remedy was worse than the disease. The casting out of demons was one thing, and a very acceptable thing it was, and all honour to the stranger who had landed on their shores to do this thing. But when it came to touching their financial interests and causing them to lose trade and money the whole attitude changed. That was too heavy a price to pay, and so *“the whole multitude...besought him to depart from them.”* (Luke 8:37)

That part of the story is a parable indeed. There are plenty in this world today who would gladly be delivered from the bondage and oppression of sin, but when they learn what the obligation will be, they turn away. True it is that the saving power of God is free to all, but then that is not the whole of the story. God does not just forgive sin so that man can make a clean start and sin again. God created man in the first place to have definite obligations toward him and to assume definite responsibilities in and towards God's universe. No man will ever attain everlasting life without willingly taking upon himself those obligations and so fitting into the pattern of life which God has devised for him. So, after deliverance, there is a price to be paid, and even although the service of God is perfect freedom, it is still service and man must enter and remain in it.

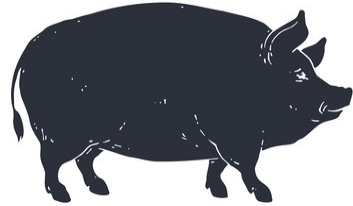
The man who had been healed realised that. The story closes with the one-time demoniac, clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. He at any rate, having come in contact with the power of God which is unto salvation, was not going to lose touch with it again. Luke tells us (8:38) that this man also besought Jesus. But it was not that he *“besought him to depart from them.”* He *“besought him that He might be with him.”* He wanted to give his life, for what it was worth, to Jesus. He wanted to be a disciple.

Jesus accepted him. It is true that the text says, *“but Jesus sent him away, saying, ‘Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.’”* (vv.38-39 NKJV) That does not mean that Jesus rejected his proffered service. He accepted it, and sent the man straight away to be a missionary to his own people. Obviously his preaching would be much

more effective in a circle where his past history was known than in a strange environment where he was just another convert to Jesus of Nazareth.

There the story ends, as so many of these stories do end, on a missionary note. The man who is first sighted coming forth out of the dead world of the tombs, exceeding fierce so that none could approach him, naked and demented, is last seen going forth into the world of living men, childlike and peaceable, clothed, in his right mind, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of peace. Jesus has done that same thing for so many in every generation. “*Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” There is a price to pay, but “*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” (Matt. 11:28-29 NKJV)

AOH



*Continued from page 96*

Return, return! Leave thou the swine and famine  
 And seek again the plenty of thy home!  
 Why dost thou toil among the husks of mammon,  
 When to His rest the Father bids thee come?  
 Return thou to His arms, His kiss, His blessing,  
 Accept the robe, the sandals, and the ring,  
 After thy sinfulness and guilt confessing,  
 By Jesus found, lost treasure of the King!

Return, return! The angel-hosts bend o'er thee—  
 They wait to bear the tidings' joyful sound.  
 They have beheld the Savior dying for thee,  
 And will rejoice to sing, *The lost is found!*  
 Return, for He will heal all thy backsliding—  
 Will love thee freely, and will thus forgive;  
 Come, weary soul, rest in His love abiding,  
 Thou hast been dead—arise today and live!

*Poems of Dawn*

## THE GOLDEN FUTURE

### Part 3 Whither Man?

There is an old story in English history which tells of a conversion of Edwin, king of Northumbria, by Bishop Paulinus in the year A.D. 627. The old pagan, surrounded by his thanes\* gave respectful attention to the Christian missionary, and at the conclusion of his words looked around the circle and asked each one present to say what he thought of this new teaching. Spake one old warrior: “The present life of man upon earth, O King, seems to me in comparison with that time which is unknown to us like the swift flight of a sparrow through the mead-hall where you sit at supper in winter, with your Ealdormen and thanes, while the fire blazes in the midst and the hall is warmed, but the wintry storms of rain or snow are raging abroad. The sparrow, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry tempest, but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, passing from winter to winter again. So this life of man appears for a little while, but of what is to follow or what went before we know nothing at all. If, therefore, this new doctrine tells us something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed.” (Bede)

This story expresses the attitude of humankind through the ages. Shakespeare’s “bourne” from which “no traveller returns” is for many people a land shrouded in mystery, and the purpose of life and the intention of God in creation an insoluble enigma.

Why is this? Largely because of inaccurate beliefs respecting the teaching of Christ and the message of the Bible. A vaguely defined Heaven, a dreadful Hell, and the awful prospect of the “Day of Judgment” has coloured religious thought with a sombre hue which is not easily brightened. Yet to the thoughtful and reflective, the Bible can speak today with a clarity never known before and convey a hope for all humanity which is founded upon logical and understandable principles.

There is a basic law governing all God’s creation. That law declares that only righteousness can persist for all time; evil, although intruding and permitted for a season, must eventually bring about its own end. The whole of creation will ultimately continue to all eternity without the existence of evil in any form. Any other conclusion is wholly irreconcilable with the character of the Creator.

An equally important principle is that God, in bringing into existence a

\* Local lords of the manor

material creation, the earth, did so for the deliberate purpose of providing a suitable environment for a race of beings of a new order—mankind. Spiritual beings, inhabitants of the spiritual realm, had existed for countless ages before this earth came into existence, but with the ending of those long epochs during which the primitive globe gradually cooled and became capable of supporting living creatures, God created something entirely new—*Man*, made in the mental and moral image and likeness of God, adapted in every way to this earth and its resources, and—this is most important—intended to live for ever upon this earth under conditions of perfection.

Man was never intended to become an angel. The spiritual and earthly worlds are separate and distinct, and will always remain so. It is true that in the development of the Divine Plan a certain company of human beings—the “Church of Christ,” His disciples of this Age—are invited to a “High Calling” which results in their transformation from earthly nature to spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46-52), but apart from this exception, which is a subject demanding separate and detailed consideration, God’s purposes for humankind is an earthly one—eternal life in an environment for which they are by every law of nature best fitted. The symbolic golden harps and trumpets, be-jewelled mansions and white robes of the New Jerusalem are to be interpreted as allegorising the immensely varied interests and occupations, the arts and sciences, of that perfect state of human society dwelling in shadowless happiness amidst the green fields and sparkling streams of an earthly Paradise.

One grim spectre bars the way. Evil, the dread influence which is the cause of all sin and death, must never enter that fair land. Those who are vouchsafed entrance to this wonderful inheritance must themselves be perfect, upright, in fullest accord with the righteous laws of all creation and able to take their place as citizens of earth through the eternal ages. And man is not fit. Every member of the race is fallen below normal, under the influence and power of some one or other of the many manifestations of evil or held in the grip of sin. Before humanity can enter the Promised Land there must be a great cleansing.

No external purification this. No mere adherence to some code of rules which defines, in human language, the Law of God. It is not sufficient to profess a renunciation of sin and only casually and formally accept the name of Jesus Christ. These things are laudable in themselves but they do not penetrate deeply enough. The men and women who will compose that sinless society of the future will retain their uprightness before God by



reason of an intelligent understanding of the principles which underlie God's decree that righteousness must be universal; and a voluntary acceptance of the conditions of life as laid down by their Heavenly Father. Man will be brought to view with dispassionate eyes the nature and effects of evil upon the one hand and the nature and effects of good upon the other, and then make a deliberate choice. The present life is an object lesson in the former, for all humanity has a very practical and first-hand experience with sin and evil. There will be a time, though, when all people will enjoy an equally practical experience with the effects of righteousness. Since many of the earth's past inhabitants now sleep in death, there must be a great awakening from the grave, that all who have ever lived may take up their position in this further development of the Divine Plan.

That future experience of righteousness will need a benevolent and all-powerful administration. Benevolent, because the whole object of that period is for the ultimate happiness of men. All-powerful, because it is essential that the influence and machinations of evilly minded men shall not impose restraint or bondage upon those who are endeavouring to learn the laws of the Kingdom. The practice of evil will therefore be forcibly restrained, and a theocracy of righteousness instituted, whilst humanity, as yet in a childhood stage, are progressing in an education which is to bring them eventually to the crossroads of decision.

For that decision has to be made. God will coerce no man's will; and although it is true that during this age and this lifetime no man has any option but to be born and live as best he can under the domination of evil; and equally true that in the next age he will live his life under the dominion of truth and equity; yet at the end of that era there is a time when all restraining influence is removed and to every man upon earth comes the solemn adjuration "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." (Josh. 24:15) The Messianic reign of Christ comes to an end when He steps aside and allows every man and woman, fully informed as to the relative consequence of evil and righteousness and fully able to choose the one or the other without let or hindrance, to make the momentous choice.

That choice is momentous because by that day not one living soul will be ignorant of the basic principle of creation—the consequence of sin, eternal death; and that of righteousness, life in perpetuity. And when it has been made, the immutable laws of God will bring to an irrevocable end the presence of evil in His fair universe.

There is no man who can be entrusted with the oversight of that righteous

administration of the Messianic Kingdom,—no statesmen or politician, no writer or philosopher, no scientist or organiser, who could possibly be given all power in heaven and earth for the reclamation of the human race from degradation and their advancement to perfection. That is why Jesus Christ is to be earth's new King, to rule in righteousness and equity. That is why the Bible speaks of the world as rejoicing at His coming to inaugurate this epoch of universal instruction in righteousness which shall be for the salvation of "whosoever will."

That is why, without any possibility of doubt, *Jesus Christ must come again.*

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*"Be glad, thou thirsty desert: let the wilderness exult, and flower as the lily. And the desert places of Jordan shall blossom and rejoice: the glory of Libanus has been given to it, and the honour of Carmel; and my people shall see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of God.*

*"Be strong, ye relaxed hands and palsied knees. Comfort one another, ye faint-hearted; be strong, fear not; behold, our God renders judgment, and He will render it; He will come and save us. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the stammerers shall speak plainly; for water has burst forth in the desert, and a channel of water in a thirsty land. And the dry land shall become pools, and a fountain of water shall be poured into the thirsty land; there shall there be a joy of birds, ready habitations and marshes. There shall be there a pure way, and it shall be called a holy way; and there shall not pass by there any unclean person, neither shall there be there an unclean way; but the dispersed shall walk on it, and they shall not go astray. And there shall be no lion there, neither shall any evil beast go up upon it, nor at all be found there: but the redeemed and gathered on the Lord's behalf shall walk in it, and shall return, and come to Sion with joy, and everlasting joy shall be over their head; for on their head shall be praise and exultation, and joy shall take possession of them; sorrow and pain, and groaning have fled away."*

(Septuagint translation of Isa. 35)

## PARADISE ON EARTH

I . Times of Restitution

*“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing...then the eyes of the blind shall be opened...the lame man shall leap...and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy...and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* (Isa. 35:1-10 RSV)

This rhapsody of the prophet Isaiah, who saw in vision the world as it will be in the day of Christ’s kingdom on earth, is deservedly famous as one of the finest flights of imagery in the Bible. But it is no fantasy; Isaiah lived nearly three thousand years ago and he knew that the Golden Age would not come in his own lifetime nor yet for many generations after that; yet he died in the fixed conviction that it would surely come. He was not the only one; St. Peter, preaching a few days after the Day of Pentecost, declared that God would *“send Jesus Christ...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) True to his words references to and descriptions of this promised paradise on earth when, under the wise and just oversight of the Lord Christ and his followers, all the ills from which society now suffers will be done away, abound in the writings of nearly all the Bible writers. The inception of that Age of peace and righteousness, nowadays variously called the Messianic Age, the Millennial Age, or just the Millennium, is always associated in the Scriptures with the return of Christ to this earth, his Second Advent. That is the focal point when *“the kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever.”* (Rev. 11:15)

One may be led to wonder why the accepted Christian faith of today seems measurably to have lost sight of this promised eminently satisfactory climax to the increasing trouble and confusion of this at present very unsatisfactory world. There is a reason, and for that reason one has to go back to medieval times. Way back in the centuries before Jesus was born at Bethlehem the people to whom He then came had a very definite view of the Divine Plan for the future of this world. From the time that the nation of Israel was organised by Moses at the Exodus from Egypt, they were told by their spiritual leaders that in the fulness of time the Messiah would come from above to establish a righteous rule in the earth in which the dead as well as the living would share, and that Israel was to become a

kind of missionary nation to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. (Isa. 49:6) This was on the basis of the Divine promise to Abraham in ancient times "*in thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Singularly enough, little attention has been given to this basic promise in Christian teaching and yet it is the basis upon which the whole of God's plans for the human race is founded. The coming of the Millennium is the realisation of that promise.

The early Christians took over this belief in the future Divine kingdom on earth from their predecessors and for five or six centuries they looked for the promised return of Christ to bring it about. Then came St. Augustine, considered the most influential theologian of the Age, who transformed the accepted Christian faith into a system of Heaven for the righteous and Hell for the unrighteous and the total destruction of planet earth at the Day of Judgment. That proved so useful a tool in the hands of the priests and ecclesiastics of the day for the purpose of keeping their people in submission that the doctrine of the Millennium with its glorious hope for all people was all but lost for a thousand years, only to surface again after the Reformation and particularly since the 18th century.

The present-day view of the Millennial reign of Christ often falls short of the reality by visualising it as an extension of the present world order but under Divine sovereignty. Thus, it is suggested, life and death will go on much as at present except that the normal life span will be considerably increased; generation will follow generation in a world which is becoming progressively more god-like until at the end will come the Day of Judgment when the dead will be raised and all earthly affairs wound up. In this view of the Millennium there is no place for those who are living today or for those already dead; one might be justified in asking why those born during that particular thousand years of earth's history should be so favoured above the myriads of the present and past who have had to endure the sorrows and injustices of "this present evil world." (Gal. 1:4) Unless the Millennium is to be for the benefit of all persons, back to the beginning, it has no logical purpose in the Divine plan of salvation in Christ and the blessing of all families of the earth.

It follows then, as a matter of basic principle, that the coming Age of righteousness is not an extension of the present world-order at all; it is an entirely new start. The existing system, with all its shortcomings and imperfections, with the powers and practices which support the domination of evil over humankind, is to be brought to an end and a new and

benevolent order of things instituted in its stead, supervised by the returned Christ, and administered on earth by upright and able men who will come to the front for that purpose. Because it is the final phase of the “Day of Grace,” in the which the issue as to worthiness or unworthiness of eternal life for each individual is to be decided, all who have ever lived must have their place and share in its benefits. What St. Paul called “*this present evil world*” is to be brought to an end, with all its evil, at the Second Advent of Christ, and be superseded by a “*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*” (2 Pet. 3:13) Jesus called that period “*the regeneration*” (Matt. 19:28) meaning the giving of new life, and that is precisely what it will accomplish.

Christ returns, then, to establish a new order of society the administration of which will be in the hands of men and women who during their earthly life have come into heart-harmony with him and his teachings and by reason of devotion to his service have become thoroughly conversant with every aspect of Divine Law. These are they to whom the educational and uplift work of that Age can safely be entrusted: such will have achieved a balance of judgment and clear apprehension of right and wrong which is lacking, and so sadly lacking, in many of even the most intellectual and able of today’s leaders. It is to be expected that by that time many of these leaders, disheartened by their failure to avert the obvious imminent collapse of the present world system, will be ready to give way to the new administration. That the sin and selfishness of man must inevitably culminate in the breakdown of all human forms of self-government seems certain at the present time—and at no very distant date. The commercial and other institutions of the world which batten on the wants and weaknesses of humanity may be expected to put up a fight to preserve their interests, but the powers of Heaven will prove superior to their resistance and although a time of severe turmoil and stress may be expected when battle is joined, the issue is not left in doubt. The 19th chapter of Revelation affords a vivid picture of the evil forces of the world gathered together to make war against the Son of God coming forth from heaven; they give way and from that moment the glories of the Millennium will begin.

There will then dawn a day when despairing humanity realises that a new power has taken control of earth’s affairs. The politicians and statesmen, weary and dispirited at the failure of all their efforts, may at the first pay little attention to the new voice which is raised. Certain Biblical allusions seem to indicate that the men to take immediate control will be certain stalwart heroes of old, men who have walked with God and understand

those principles of Divine government which are so much discounted today. The histories of Moses the founder of a nation, Daniel the statesman of Babylon, Nehemiah the patriot, and others like them, are sufficient to carry assurance that if men like these were alive today, then peace upon an honourable basis would speedily come to this war-wracked world.

The impact of this clarion call to righteousness and equity, resounding through the world, will awaken all men to a realisation of the new power that has taken control of earth's affairs. Many there will undoubtedly be, men and women of goodwill, who will at once hail this proclamation with eagerness and range themselves upon the side of these new leaders. As Isaiah said (25:9) "*It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*" Some there may be who will stand aloof, sullen, not willing that the searching light of Truth shall reveal the darkness of their lives. Those who have in the past become degraded and brutalised, have lost the finer instincts of humanity, may cry out that they want none of this new life; those whose lives have been spent in preying upon their fellows and gratifying their own pleasures and desires at the expense of others may fiercely oppose this threatened invasion of their vested interests. Yet this first reaction in favour of the new administration, even if confined to a proportion of earth's millions only, will produce an effect such as no reformation or revolution in past history has ever approached.

The next development will be even more startling, for people will begin to discover that vice and abuse of right principles no longer escapes retribution; moreover that the very attempt to injure or destroy another will be frustrated at the outset. The psychological atmosphere created by the strangeness of such things, the missionary zeal of teachers who will be at work amongst the people and above all the evident operation of Divine power in a totally inexplicable manner will begin to render it literally true that "*they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*" (Isa. 65:25) The maliciously minded and the evil-doer may injure themselves; others they cannot injure. When this realisation sinks into the minds of men, that dread enemy, fear, which today holds all men in thrall, will be swept away. "*My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.*" (Isa. 32:18) In such an atmosphere of confidence there will be possibilities of rapid development in the knowledge of the laws of God, and the writing of those laws in the hearts of men.

In proportion as men sympathise with and desire the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose, so will they come into harmony with his precepts. Each individual will become in turn a teacher, assisting less fortunate ones along the pathway on which they themselves are progressing. Opportunities for every form of Christian endeavour and social service will abound, and the sincerity of each man's heart will be demonstrated by the eagerness with which he throws himself into the work of helping others. Under such conditions it is easy to comprehend that humankind will become one great family, men consulting with men for the wise and effective utilisation of the common blessings and for the undertaking of those enterprises which will be necessary for the continued welfare of the human race. The present evils of competitive enterprise and international antagonism will cease to be, and so will be fulfilled the word which declares that "*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.*" "*They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*" (Psa. 46:9; Isa. 2:4). Social service will be the keynote, and the "Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man" will become reality in a sense greater by far than has ever been dreamed by the most ardent of political reformers. The order of the day will be reconstruction. No longer will the brevity of human life discourage or dissuade men from setting their hands to enterprises which may require centuries for their full accomplishment. The pulling down of all that is drab and ugly in the dwelling-places of men and the painstaking erection of edifices beautiful to the eye and sumptuous in their amenities will provide occupation of the most pleasant kind. Agriculture will come into its own, for the earth itself is to be restored and made beautiful and bring forth in abundance. Great irrigation schemes will transform the world's deserts into fertile plains; hitherto inaccessible regions will become the playground of men; in every possible sense of the word it shall be true that "*then shall the earth yield her increase.*" (Psa. 67:6)

Nor is the new social order to content itself with the external aids to man's happiness. The arts and sciences, the pursuit of which is today so often restricted to the leisured classes among humanity, will then be open to all. Knowledge will be pursued for its own sake, and the fruits of scientific research applied to worthy objects for the increase of human comfort and happiness. The musical festivals and philosophical debates of that day will surpass by far the loftiest attainments of men in the present or the past.

So will the centuries pass, whilst the earth grows ever fairer and more beautiful and humanity attains to a better understanding of the message of

Jesus Christ and the goodness of God. The days of evil will slip away into the background—never forgotten, always remaining an imperishable recollection of the terrible consequences of sin but no longer having the power to hurt or destroy. The song of the angels “peace on earth, goodwill among men” will have become an accomplished fact. Human beings will be fair of form and virile in body, magnificent examples of the creative power of God. With the consciousness of an eternity of supremely happy life before them they will rise at every dawn to pursue with unflurried minds the occupations and pursuits to which they have set themselves. The world’s work will go on—people will till the soil and reap the fruits of their labours, they will foregather together for the study and practice of arts and sciences which will always have something new to reveal, they will travel and rejoice in the varied glories of Nature and live their lives in absolute peace and harmony with each other and with God.

Many Christian thinkers and writers of the past two centuries have eulogised the glories of that coming Millennial Age where peace, prosperity and justice will prevail and all men enter into the inheritance God has provided. Perhaps the most noteworthy is the pen-picture painted by Charles T. Russell in “*The Divine Plan of the Ages*” (1884 p.191-192) picturing the calm splendour of that Age.

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

Of the everlasting years that lie beyond the end of the Millennial Age the Scriptures say little or nothing. That they will be years of continuing activity and increasing achievement in the interests of God’s creation there can be no doubt. Nothing is or can be static in God’s universe, and although it is true that at that point in time all who by then have become



reconciled to God through Christ will have attained perfection and full communion with him, and all evil and evildoers will have vanished for ever, it must be that glories as yet unimagined await men in the great beyond. Of the triumphs of that progress into man's destiny it is not possible to speak, only to say that they are the destined inheritance of every one who will have given himself to the Lord Jesus Christ and obtained life through him.

But coming back to the present, the obvious question in every mind must be that first posed by the disciples when Jesus told them about all this; "*when shall these things be?*" (Matt. 24:3) The answer to that lies in a correct appraisal of the "signs of the times," which He at that time outlined to them. Sober Christian students and observers for nearly two centuries past have been getting progressively closer to the correlation of those signs with present-day current events; it can be said now with reasonable conviction that we are at the eleventh hour. The dawn of that promised Millennial Day is at the point of breaking upon the world. *AOH*

## RESURRECTION

DEAR Lord, I pray for courage, strength and love,  
 For that pure wisdom, promised from above,  
 That I may faithful be and worthy found  
 To stand "that day" beside the grass-grown mound  
 Of my beloved dead, and say, "Arise!  
 Come forth to light and life, lift up thine eyes!  
 Awake and burst the prison bands of death!  
 Stand up, the God of Heaven restores thy breath!  
 Return unto the land that gave thee birth—  
 No longer, as of old, a sin-cursed earth—  
 The desert places blossom as the rose,  
 With fragrance laden, every breeze that blows!  
 A Highway thou shalt find, a way of life,  
 No pride, nor selfishness, no envy, strife,  
 Shall prosper there; the ransomed of the Lord  
 Shall walk thereon, obedient to His Word;  
 No longer shall the 'lion' or 'ravenous beast'  
 Upon the poor, the weak, the innocent feast;  
 There God shall wipe all tears from every eye,  
 No grief shall touch thine heart, not e'en a sigh,  
 And there shall be no death, nor any pain!  
 Awake! Rejoice and join the glad refrain—  
 'Hosanna, peace on earth, good will toward men,  
 All honour to the Lamb. Amen! Amen!'"



## YOU SHALL NOT BUILD ME A HOUSE

1 Chronicles 17:1-10

Imagine ourselves for a moment in David's shoes. He has been successfully established as King over Israel and has rebuilt Jerusalem as his capital city. A great Thanksgiving service is held, David himself offering the sacrifice to God. There is singing, music and dancing, and all Israel rejoices with him before the Lord. Finally it is time for David to go home.

Relaxing with his household, and blessing them with his account of the celebrations and the Lord's goodness, David becomes silent and thoughtful. He looks around him. The house itself is walled with fine cedar and richly furnished and decorated. His righteous heart is suddenly appalled. "Here am I dwelling in comfort and splendour," he thinks to himself, "while the Ark of God—the very symbol of His presence and blessing, lies in a tent!" Straightway his intention is to build his Lord and Redeemer a fitting house.

However, the Lord intervenes through the prophet Nathan. "Go and tell David My servant, 'Thus says the LORD, "You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in, for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day, but I have been from tent to tent and from one dwelling place to another.'"" (1 Chron. 17:4-5 NASB footnote)

God is saying to David that by his Spirit He has lived among the people since the day that He led them out of Egypt. "God is a Spirit," observed our Lord Jesus and they that worship him worship in Spirit and Truth. (John 4:24) The lesson that David was being taught was that God was not to be considered in terms of bricks and stone or flesh and blood. He is to be understood in terms of Spirit and as one that inhabits a spiritual Temple. Paul expressed the same principle when he taught the Corinthian believers that "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*" (1 Cor. 15:50 NIV) Years later, when Solomon was commissioned to build the Temple he acknowledged that, in reality, God could not abide in a stone dwelling place, for not even the Universe itself can contain him. (1 Kings 8:27)

The lesson that David learnt was a valuable one and very relevant to us today. God promises David that He would build a house—an enduring inheritance—for him. Herein lies the fundamental truth for us to appreciate. We can do *nothing* for God; He must do *everything* for us. Religious zeal and enthusiasm have stirred the hearts of God's people down the centuries to our present day. Like David we marvel at the Grace and

Providence of God and desire earnestly to do something in return for him. But it is futile to think in this way. In Psalm 127:1 we read, “*Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.*” The lesson had been learnt!

Do we have big meetings? Does the power of praise and worship overwhelm us? Are we experiencing some mighty act of God among us? Have we returned, like David, to our everyday lives with a resolution to earnestly commit ourselves to the building up of the Church, God’s temple? You and I know that we have.

Here then is the problem. We are saying, in effect, “Lord, let me show you what I can do for you,” when in all humility, acknowledging the poverty of our human condition, we should exclaim, “Lord, show me what you want me to do!” The religious heart of man, inspired by God’s majesty and goodness, desires to put himself at his disposal and so offer his resources to “extend the Kingdom.” This is folly. The Temple of God in Spirit is not the fusion of bricks and mortar; it is not even the binding together of man to man in earnest church building. The Temple of God is spiritual, it is invisible, a place in which we are joined, through faith, in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19-22)

We cannot build for God. Instead, if we will permit it, He will build for us, in us, and with us. He will prepare us as living stones in the quarry of our earthly sojourn, and in due season, transport us to the place where we shall see that we have become the New Jerusalem that comes down out of Heaven from God. This will be the manifestation of his Kingdom. (1 Cor, 15:50-53; 1 Thess. 4:15-17)

David’s heart was right with God, but he misunderstood the response that He requires. He was motivated by love and gratitude as we so often are. Yet he had to learn that he, as a man, could offer nothing and do nothing of himself. God alone is the builder. He alone the executor of his plans. We are at most pliant instruments in his hands, clay upon the Potter’s wheel.

*“For our citizenship (true home) is in HEAVEN from which we also eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform our lowly body into conformity with his glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject ALL things to Himself.”* (Phil. 3:20-21 NASB footnote)

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## FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS

The vision of Revelation 4 depicts a transcendent heavenly Throne around which is a circle of twenty-four subordinate thrones, on which sit twenty-four Elders. Without being specifically informed who they were, John identifies them readily enough and describes them by a term very familiar in Israel.

Who were these Elders? What was their office, and why twenty-four? The answer leads back into the sacred records of Israel, but first let it be noted that the Authorised Version says “*round about the Throne were four-and-twenty seats.*” (Rev. 4:4) There is no just reason for making this distinction between the central Throne and the twenty-four, for the same Greek word (*thronos*) is used for the twenty-four as for the one. They may have been less in size, and lower in position, and less elaborate in design; but for all that they were thrones, and they who sat on them wore crowns. Hence, both crown and throne bore testimony to their kingliness. Additionally they held harps and carried golden bowls full of incense. (Rev. 5:8 RV)

The word (*phialas*) translated “vials” is used in the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Scriptures for vessels belonging to the altar. (Exod. 27:3). This shows that these Elders possessed priestly privileges, in that they offered the odours, or incense of saints, to the occupant of the central Throne. They had harps also, which reveals them as the leaders of worship—the sweet singers before God. Thus they are shown to possess the privileges of the Priesthood, with access to the Temple, and the right of entry into the Holy Place and the golden Altar.

The Scriptural basis for the official position of these Elders is laid down in their functioning in the court of Pharaoh, around the person of Joseph, the Hebrew Prime Minister. They were evidently the representatives at court of all the people of Israel. They accompanied Joseph and his brethren to the land of Canaan to bury Jacob. (Gen. 50:7-13).

Israel evidently copied this institution from the Egyptians, for when Moses came under the Lord’s commission to lead them forth from Egypt, God said to him, “...*Go, and gather the Elders of Israel together, and say unto them...*” (Exod. 3:16) “*And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.*” (Exod. 4:29) After the Lord had spoken the Words of the law from the top of Sinai, Moses called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words. (Exod. 19:7) Again, when Moses had sprinkled the book of the Words and the

people, seventy of the elders of the people went up into the mount, and saw there a representation of God. (Exod. 24:9-11) Here they are mentioned as a company, seventy strong. Also they are called nobles, and need to be distinguished from the princes, of whom there were but twelve. (Num. 1:5-16) Further reference to this body of Elders is found throughout Israel's later history, and in every case denotes a body which had some measure of control in Israel—governors of cities and villages.

The origin of the Elders of the type seen in this Throne-scene goes back to the days of David, when he set in order the courses of the Priests in readiness for the new Temple that was to be erected in place of the tabernacle. A remarkable thing about this arrangement was that David received his instructions direct from God. Addressing Solomon, when abdicating in his favour, David said "*All this...the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.*" (1 Chron. 28:19) Like Moses, who was commanded to make the Tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him in the holy mount, David was given a pattern of the Temple structures, with the orders of the Priesthood and Levites for its services. Hence, these instructions have the sanction of Divine Authority and inspiration to be followed precisely and carefully. This was to be a copy of a heavenly original.

The only institution in Israel throughout its history which consisted of twenty-four sections was the Priestly constitution for the new Temple. The tribes, minus Levi, were twelve, and their princes twelve. It is thought that their secular Elders numbered seventy or seventy-two, and that this body gave rise, after the Captivity, to the Sanhedrin. The number twenty-four, therefore, excludes both the princes and secular elders under God's direction—sixteen courses for the sons of Eleazar and eight for the sons of Ithamar (the two surviving sons of Aaron)—twenty-four courses in all. (1 Chron. 24:4)

The singers were also ordained in twenty-four courses, with twelve in each course (1 Chron. 25:7-31), two hundred and eighty-eight persons in all, to lead the praise and song in the Temple service. Over each course of Priests, Levites and Singers was placed a governor or elder (1 Chron. 24:4) as an Elder priest, subject to the supreme authority of the High Priest. This is the identical number\* seen in vision by Ezekiel within the inner court of the Lord's House, worshipping with their backs to the Temple of the Lord, and their faces to the east, committing abominations, (Ezekiel 8:15-18)\* and for which the glory of the Lord left its place in the Temple of Jerusalem (Ezek. 10:18), which was then given over to

\* Verse states twenty-five with the likely thought one is the High Priest

destruction.

In the Septuagint version the word for Elder is “*presbuteros*”—“chief men” and was differentiated from “*presbutos*”—“old men.” We still retain this term in our modern official title ‘Alderman,’ which carries with it a special precedence over other members of our municipal councils. The word Elder does not therefore in itself indicate a priestly prince but its association with the number twenty-four most certainly does. This official class among the priests is referred to in Isa. 37:2 as “Elders (*presbuteros*) of the Priests,” and in Jer. 19:1 as “the Ancients (*presbuteron*) of the Priests.”

John saw this priestly constitution gathered in holy conclave—the full twenty-four Elders, each the head of his course, each representing his course. The priestly function is represented by the vials full of odours (bowls full of incense), the sweet singers by the harp and their song; but, in addition, over and above all other adornments is their royal crown—these are Kings as well as Priests. Accordingly these twenty-four crowned Priests are symbolic heads of the twenty-four courses, representing the thousands of this high and privileged class of Priests, Levites, and Singers.

Now as to this priestly class in its relationship to Israel. Under the Covenant, Israel was taken from among the nations to be God’s firstborn. (Exod. 4:22-23) They were to be a kingdom of Priests through whom other nations were to be introduced to God. They were a called-out people, separated from among the nations of the world. But the priestly class was an additionally separated class—an election within an election, and brought specially near to God, to approach him, and to serve their brethren in a special way. With the establishment of the Temple, this special class was divided into twenty-four courses, in order to foreshadow the Heavenly Priesthood, prepared to minister in the real Temple condition between God and restored Israel, and ultimately all men. The twenty-four Elders upon their twenty-four thrones, crowned with gold, and robed in white, represent all the true Priesthood, who will be accepted as kings and priests under Jesus, the great High Priest. They will be pure and holy, wearing white which is the “righteousness of the saints.” (Rev. 19:8)

When the time came for the supersession of the Aaronic priesthood and the carnal sacrifices by the higher and better priesthood and sacrifices, the temporary arrangement which gave the privileges of the Priesthood to

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Levi, instead of the firstborn, was withdrawn, and the system reverted to its original form. Henceforth, from among all the tribes of Israel, all who believed in Jesus as the Redeemer, and surrendered their lives to him in

full consecration, were accepted as first-fruits, the firstborns, and became “*the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven.*” This very term links them with the whole family (Heb. 12:22-24 NIV) and betokens also others to follow after.

This royal priesthood, constituted of the remnant from Israel, and of such from among the Gentiles who accept Jesus and consecrate their lives to him, is represented by the twenty-four Elders in this heavenly scene, not as individuals, but as a complete body, and are found awaiting the coming of the Kinsman-Redeemer to take the Scroll. They are to be the witnesses of the Redemption of the purchased possession, to support the verdict, and testify that it has transpired, and cause the glad tidings to pass to angels, to Israel, and to lead the Hallelujah chorus of the nations, to earth’s remotest bounds.

AOH



Image from Dreamstime

## DESERT ROSE

The rose quoted in Isaiah 35:1 is from the Hebrew word *chabatstseleth*. The more recent translations (AMP, ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSVA, RSV) use the word “crocus.” Some, such as the New English Translation, translate it as “lily” whereas the KJV, Darby, NKJV and YLT use the English word “rose.”

The Good News translation says “flowers will bloom in the wastelands” describing what happens when arid areas get unexpected rains and flowers of many colours bloom for a time in abundance.

Picture of “*colchicum autumnale*” thought most likely to be the plant in question.

NAC