

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. V JULY 1, 1922 No. 13

THE POWER OF THE LOVE OF GOD

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."--1 John 4:16.

THAT our great Creator is a God of love is a teaching peculiar to the Bible, though His attribute of love is not so clearly exemplified in the Old Testament Scriptures. But as we come down to the New Testament times, we find a new thing brought in--a double testimony--that God loved the whole world, even while they were sinners, and also the testimony that He loves the Church. "God so loved the *world* that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The penalty upon mankind was to *perish*, as being unfit to live and enjoy God's blessing. God had a sympathetic love for all His creatures who were under such condemnation. How was this love shown? We make inquiries, and find out that the first Manifestation of His Love was that He gave His Son to die for the world. Here He was merely beginning to show us how great He is and how great is His Love.

The Scriptures assure us that the great difficulty with mankind is that they are weak, fallen, ignorant, under bonds of superstition and misled by the Adversary. It is because God saw that the hearts of humanity are not really in that deplorable condition intentionally or deliberately that He has provided the way of escape. If we were wilfully, intentionally wicked, then the Lord would have no sympathy for us at all. When God looks at us as a race, He perceives that only very few have any knowledge of Him and of His character of Justice, Wisdom, Mercy and Love, and of the principles of His Government. And so God said, I will see what can be done with these creatures; I will make a Plan by which every one of them may be recovered through the gift of My beloved Son, the Logos. They shall be lifted up out of sin and degradation, and it will be the only lesson of the exceeding wickedness of sin that they will need throughout eternity. I will make the provision broad enough to include Adam and all his race.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE

The first feature of this Plan began to be manifested when our Lord Jesus came into the world. So the Scriptures say that Christ "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." What *good tidings* did He bring? Blessings for all of humanity who would seek Him in honesty and earnestness of heart! He brought the *good tidings* that all who would manifest their love for Him should have eternal life; and that a special class, who would manifest special love for the Lord, might become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ His Son. "So great salvation began to be spoken by our Lord."--2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:3.

Not all can hear this Message, because some are so stupid through the blinding of the Adversary that they cannot believe it. To such it is not good tidings at all, but foolishness. Such have no ears to hear, the Bible says. Others can hear a little, and say that there is one chance in a million of escaping eternal torment. Others have

their eyes and ears more widely open, and these are able to hear something, to appreciate something more than the majority. The Apostle tells us that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not."--2 Cor. 4:4.

Looking back to the days of Jesus we find that when He preached, many of the people delighted to hear His words. They said, "Never man spake like this man." He told the people that God loved them. And the people said, The Scribes and Pharisees will not have anything to do with us; but this man loves us and tells us that God loves us, that God does not despise even us poor miserable sinners! Oh, "never man spake like *this* man"!

But their minds not being free, they were not able to appreciate all that He said. They thought that this Message which He brought them might be fabrication, and they *dared not* believe it. They asked, Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed and become Jesus' disciples? And when they learned that not many of them had, they said: Perhaps we are incompetent to judge; these are our leaders, we must follow them.

But there were some who were able to take in the matter more fully. And to these Jesus said, "Blessed are *your* eyes, for *they see*; and *your* ears, for *they hear*." Then to these who could see and hear, Jesus gave certain special lessons applicable to them--and not only to them, but also to a certain like company or class, all the way down through the Age. He told them that because they manifested a responsiveness of heart they were pleasing to Him. He told them that in proportion as they would make progress in imitating Him, in that same proportion they would come into fellowship with the Father and become participants in His Love.

And when some took this step of consecration, Jesus told them, "The Father Himself loveth you"--He loves you because you have taken a stand for righteousness; because when you saw these principles of righteousness, you were willing to do in accordance therewith. And the Father loves you because you are seeking to walk in the Narrow Way--the way which is difficult. The other way is a *broad* way, leading now to death and destruction. But this Narrow Way that I am pointing out to you, My dear disciples, is the way to life. It will cost you a great deal to be My disciples. But the Father will love you, and I will love you, and We will manifest Ourselves to you. And although you will have trials and difficulties, you will have the peace of God ruling in your hearts. Then the disciples said that they would leave all to follow Him.

HOW TO KEEP OURSELVES IN GOD'S LOVE

The Apostle Jude admonishes, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Here the Apostle is addressing those who have passed from the condition of the world into this special love of God--those whom He has brought into His family, as His children by adoption, through Christ Jesus. God does not love us because we are doing great and wonderful things. His special love for us began when He begat us, because of the consecration we had made--because we had entered into the Covenant of Sacrifice. And the Father delights in all those who desire to be sealed with His Spirit--who desire to become His children. He began thus to love us as babes in Christ, and He loves us as we grow stronger, and He will love us to the end!

The Apostle intimates that there is a growth in us. We are babes at first, and then children, then young men, then more fully developed. As we learn the principles of justice which permeate the Heavenly Father's character, we are to rejoice in these, and to have no other standards before our mind. We are to say, That is, our

Father's instruction, our Father's standard. So we become transformed more and more, and all standards other than those of the Heavenly Father become more and more displeasing to us.

As we journey along, we need to keep ourselves in the Love of God. It is necessary as babes that we should keep ourselves in His love; it is necessary as children; it is necessary when still further developed. How can we do this? By keeping His commandments. Thus we bring the body into subjection to the perfect will of God in Christ. Whoever does this finds himself growing. Day by day we are to grow and increase and become more and more Godlike; so we are more and more transformed as the days go by. Thus we are to keep ourselves in His love.

But if at any time during the race we should drop out and cease to cultivate these qualities, cease to be obedient to God, then we would cease more and more to have His Love, until finally we would cease to be in His Love, and the curse, the wrath of God, would abide on us. Thus we would be in a far worse condition than at first, because in the second case it would be a matter of knowledge, whereas in the first case it was a matter of ignorance, a matter of heredity. In this worse condition, God would have no sympathy for us at all.

Thus it will be with the world in the future, when they will be brought in God's providence to a full knowledge and full opportunity when they shall come to understand God and His righteousness. If they do not seek to be in harmony with Him, they will be destroyed in the Second Death.--1 Tim, 2:4; Acts 3:22, 23.

OUR HIGHEST AMBITION

The Lord Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Our love for God and God's love for us are two different matters, of course. We *revere* God even *before* we love Him. We do not know enough about Him at first to love Him. We know that we have very little power of ourselves, that we are surrounded by difficulties here, and that the Adversary has beset us on every side. And so this is the beginning of Wisdom, that we should have a reverential fear of God.

As we come to know God more and more, we see that He would not wish to do harm to any creature. And as we grow in our knowledge of God, our love for Him increases accordingly. We grow in our knowledge of how much He loves us. We did not know this at first. God is not pleased to reveal Himself to any except those who have His Spirit; therefore the very highest ambition any of us could have would be that we might know Him, that we might know more of His wonderful love, His wonderful peace, because to have this knowledge draws us nearer to God. As St. Jude says, we must continue to keep ourselves in the love of God.

Whoever would come to a full knowledge of God must first come to an appreciation of His Word and must follow a line of obedience such as would enable him to love the Lord and to appreciate His Plan. And all things working together--love, appreciation, desire to be obedient--lead onward and upward to the goal which the Lord has set before us.

WHAT CONSTITUTES GOD'S LOVE

The expression *Word of God* is sometimes used when speaking of the Bible, and sometimes when meaning a message of God. Our allegiance is due to the One from whom we have received every good and every perfect gift. There is an eminent fitness in the thought that the One who has given us *life* should have our attention to His Word, our obedience to it. Some are disposed to be self-willed; some disposed to regard the words of man, the creeds of man. Such do not pay sufficient attention to the Word of God.

God's Word is the great Standard by which all His people should regulate their lives. We might have some thought respecting the Divine Plan, or others might make suggestions to us respecting God's will; but any suggestions, whether from ourselves or from others, are all to be subject to investigation in the light of God's Word. Of course, we are first to ascertain that the claim of the Bible to be the Word of God is supported by really good evidence; then we are also to notice whether various portions are interpolations, or additions, that we may have the Word of God as pure as possible. But having *found* the Word of God, we should *keep* it, in the sense of reverencing it and obeying it. We should strive to regulate our lives and all of our doings by that Word. Whoso keepeth God's Word will as a result find that God's love is perfected in Him.--1 John 2:5.

The question then arises, What is God's Love? and in what sense can it be perfected in us? The Apostle John evidently refers to that love which is most perfectly represented in God--that love which is pure, free from all selfishness, from all stain--God's Love, because it is the right principle, the very underlying principle of His character. And all those who are keeping God's Word must have the same kind of love that He has.

At first we had a duty love. We knew that God had done great things for us, for which we should be very thankful. There was a debt of obligation on us in that respect. Then, too, we loved God because He has indicated that He will give His favor to those who love Him. Therefore a measure of selfishness would be in our love for a time. But we believe it is possible for us to have this perfect love of God. If it were perfect works of the flesh that were required, we might doubt our ability to have perfection. But since it is a matter of the *heart*, it is possible for us to attain it; for we can be pure in heart. So as our hearts become more and more free from selfishness and sin, more and more will this proper, high standard of Love be appreciated by us and perfected in us. Our minds will be influenced by this Love; and all our conduct, our thoughts, will come under the same regulation.

To have, then, this Love of God perfected in us, would seem to indicate that we would have the very highest ideal--that we love as God loves. We love our neighbor--we realize that he has certain rights which we are glad to respect. We would rather help our neighbors forward than to do anything which might hinder their progress in any way. God is not an envious, jealous, hateful God, but the God of Love. God is the *true* God, and not the one who is set up in many of the creeds.

As we appreciate the Word of God, it gives us the necessary instruction and guidance. All sin is selfishness, and all selfishness is sin. As the child of God comes to see the character of God more clearly, as he is desirous of being taught of God, he will come under the influence of God's Spirit. And he will study the Word and get clearer insight into it. Thus we grow in the knowledge of God. It is a progressive matter. God wishes all His intelligent creatures to be animated by the spirit of His Word--Love.

LOVE BASED ON FAITH

We see that the love above described would not be a love based on ignorance. On the contrary, it is a love based on a clear knowledge of God, on an undissembled faith, a faith fully appreciating what He has said. For instance, one might have a certain love for God, and by and by a clearer understanding of God's character might shake that kind of love. God's intention is that mankind shall understand His arrangements thoroughly; and if they then appreciate His character, they will have the undissembled faith, and a love that appreciates all the features of His Plan.

We all see that in our experiences God gives us instruction respecting Himself. As we come to know Him, and to love Him *because* we know Him, we are proportionately getting this faith in Him of the undissembled kind. It is a faith based on a knowledge of God's character and Plan.. An angel may be said to have faith--a well rounded out faith. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth." And God wishes that all His intelligent creatures shall worship Him from this standpoint of undissembled faith--a faith that is genuine, a faith that is well rounded out, knitted together, a consistent faith. Therefore God wishes to have all men come to the knowledge of the Truth.--1 Tim. 2:4.

God's arrangement is that we first make use of what truth we have, and thus have more appreciation; then more knowledge, and then more appreciation. A *well rounded out* knowledge is not yet possessed by any except the Church, and we do not have *full* knowledge. But it is God's will that we shall all come to an *appreciation* of the Truth. It is not to be merely a *knowledge*, but a full *entering into* it that we may the more appreciate it. "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee," that we should become personally and intimately acquainted with the Lord. In order to do this, it is necessary that we apply our hearts to this Wisdom, that we grow in grace, grow in knowledge, that we may know His Love.

This will also be the procedure in the next Age.

The object of Christ's Kingdom will be to bring mankind to a full, clear appreciation of God's character. Such as attain this and sympathetically enjoy God's character will appreciate the principles of Justice, Love and Mercy represented in Him. Only as one appreciates these qualities in his own heart can he appreciate them in God. Only those who appreciate them will have everlasting life. Even though such should enjoy the full thousand years, they still might not be of the class to whom God would give everlasting life.

THE END OF THE LAW IS LOVE

It is not merely *faith* that is necessary--not even the well rounded out faith--there must be a *pure heart* also. We could not get the well rounded faith unless we had a pure heart. A pure heart would be a fully *consecrated heart*--the whole mind given up to the Lord's will. Such a condition is necessary before we can enter into and make progress in the Lord's way. God would not accept us at all unless we had love and purity of heart. And even more than this is necessary. We must maintain it with a good conscience. Our consciences must be able to say, "I have not only a good *wish* respecting the right, but I have good *endeavors*." We should not only be able to say, "I did right," but our consciences should be able to say, "I did the very best I was able to do." Anything short of this would not be pleasing to God.

So, then, the end, or intention, of the Divine Law is to develop in us this love--a love fully consecrated to the Lord, a love like His, a love that will be in accord with a good conscience and an undissembled faith--a faith that is well founded on the teachings of God's Word, a faith that is anxious to know God's will, and that searches the Scriptures and delights in God's Law, and that can say as the Psalmist has expressed it prophetically, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God!"

A man may discern the principle of *justice* and say, "There is the standard one must go by." Another sees *love*, and says, "There is the best standard! Is not that grand? I wish to conform to that fully!" A third recognizes that *perfection* is the standard of the Divine Law, and having consecrated himself unreservedly to do the will of God, says, "Thy Law, O God, is my delight." This one delights in God's Justice, he delights in God's Love. He sees more than merely, Thou shalt, and Thou shalt not. He sees things from God's standpoint. He sees the principles of God's character which govern the universe. So all who will ever come to an appreciation of everlasting life must learn to view matters from the standpoint of Love.

Father, forgive the heart that clings,

Thus trembling to the things of time;
And bid my soul, on soaring wings,
Ascend into a purer clime.

O let not doubts disturb its trust,

Nor sorrows dim its Heavenly love;
Nor these afflictions of the dust
My inmost calm and peace remove.

ANOTHER CHRONOLOGICAL TESTIMONY

SEVENTY YEARS OF FASTING AND MOURNING MARKED

"Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto Me, even to Me?"--Zech. 7:5.

ANOTHER line of testimony bearing upon the chronology has come to our attention a testimony which seems amongst the strongest evidences that it was but approximately 51 years from the destruction of Jerusalem, when Zedekiah was removed from the throne, to 536 B.C., and not 70 years, as we once thought. This testimony is found in Zech. 7:5, quoted at the head of this article.

In chapters 7 and 8 of the Book of Zechariah are recorded some messages which came to the Prophet on the fourth day (twenty-fourth?) of the ninth month of the fourth year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia. This king was Darius Hystaspes, whose reign began in the spring of the year 521 B.C. His fourth year was, therefore,

518 B.C. At that time the Prophet Zechariah was at Jerusalem, having returned from Babylon with the captives who came thence as the result of the decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C. Although the foundation of the Temple was laid not long after the return, the work presently ceased and remained in suspension until the second year of Darius, which was the year 520 B.C. After about 15 years of suspended activities, the work was renewed, at the instance of the Prophet Haggai, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of that year, 520 B.C., and the construction went unceasingly forward until the Temple was completed and dedicated in the sixth year of Darius, 516 B.C.

It was during the time when the Temple was nearing completion, in the year 518 B.C., that a deputation from the little city of Bethel, twelve miles north of Jerusalem, went up to worship and to inquire of the Lord of hosts. They desired to interview the priests of the Temple at Jerusalem and the Prophets of Jehovah who were there encouraging in the work of its completion. The delegation would inquire concerning a matter of considerable importance to them. The fact that the inquirers came from Bethel is obscured by the Authorized Version, which has translated the Hebrew word "Bethel" by our English words "the House of God." (Zech. 7:2.) This verse is very poorly translated. Of course, "Bethel" means "the House of God," but it was the name of a city near Jerusalem, which city sent Serezer and Regem-melek, with others, to propound a certain question to the priests and Prophets at Jerusalem. There was no Temple at Bethel then, so that the delegation came *from* Bethel instead of going *to* Bethel, as the Common Version might indicate.

The fact that this delegation went from Bethel up to Jerusalem is further proved by the language of chapter 8:20-22, which uses this visit as an example of future pilgrimages to Jerusalem, for the prophecy declares that the time will come when many strong nations and many peoples will send their representatives to Jerusalem to entreat the favor of Jehovah. They will worship the God of the Jews and seek His favor from Jerusalem, just as the little delegation did which came from Bethel.

THE INQUIRY FROM BETHEL

The question propounded by the deputation is found in verse 3 of chapter 7. It was: "Shall I weep in the fifth month, or abstain, as I have done these many years?" Just why the inquiry is placed in the first person, singular, may not be apparent, although it is evident that it was made in behalf of the city of Bethel. Now, be it observed that the question had to do with the matter of fasting and mourning in the fifth month. Why so? Because it was in the fifth month that the Temple was destroyed. There is a slight discrepancy, in the Scriptural account as to the exact day of the fifth month on which this took place, 2 Kings 25:8, 9 making it the seventh day, and Jer. 52:12, 13 having it the tenth day. Jewish authorities have explained this by stating that it was on the seventh day that the Temple was entered and profaned, until the ninth day, when it was burned until the tenth day. The destruction of the Temple in the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah became an occasion of fasting and mourning among the Jews. They also fasted on the ninth day of the fourth month, as that was the day on which Jerusalem fell; in the seventh month on account of the murder Of Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:25), and on the tenth day of the tenth month in remembrance of the day when the siege of Jerusalem began. (2 Kings 25:1.) But the particular inquiry from Bethel was concerning the fast of the fifth month, as that had to do with the Temple. During "these so many years" they had kept that fast, but now the circumstances were somewhat changed. The Temple was nearing completion. Would it be proper to continue that fast of the fifth month with its mourning? They had desired to be devout and to express their sorrow for the destruction of their Temple. Must they now continue the fast in view of the near completion of the new Temple? There must have been no little agitation at

Bethel concerning this question. So the little delegation was sent up to Jerusalem to inquire at the House of Jehovah of hosts (a different expression from "House of God"--Bethel).

The answer from Jehovah did not deal directly at first with their question by giving a "yes" or "no" answer, but after imparting some necessary instructions dealing with their past conditions and revealing that they had not fasted from the proper standpoint, the answer is given in 8:19 to the effect that not only the fast of the fifth month, but also the other fasts of the fourth, seventh and tenth months could now become occasions for joyful festivals, because the Lord had returned His favor to Jerusalem. As previously shown, the Lord's favor had already returned to them in the second year of Darius, on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, the anniversary of the laying of the foundation of the Temple, and it is not at all unlikely that it was exactly two years from that very anniversary when this delegation came from Bethel (the "twentieth" having been omitted in copying verse 1). His favor was upon them, therefore, at the date of the inquiry, and He tells them that it will now be in order to convert their fasting into feasting and their mourning into morning. Then when the greater Morning of the glad, new Day shall arrive, there will be much rejoicing indeed.

SEVENTY YEARS DEFINITELY MARKED

The seventy years mentioned in 7:5 are not the same seventy years of 1:12. We must keep this distinction clearly in mind. But this distinctive feature has been somewhat obscured by the Authorized Version having rendered it as "*those* seventy years." It should have been translated "*these* seventy years," or "*now* seventy years," as will be seen by consulting other translations, as, for instance, the Revised Version, the Massoretic Translation (Margolis), Douay Version, Purver's Translation, Kent's Student's Old Testament, and others. The word "those" is translated from the same Hebrew word that is rendered "these" in 1:12 and 7:3. The prophecy does not concern *those* seventy years, as if the *same* seventy years were referred to as mentioned in 1:12 or elsewhere. It has to do only with seventy years which reached up to that particular point, i.e., the fourth year of Darius, 518 B.C. A critical and unbiased translation of the pertinent portion of the verse is afforded by "The International Critical Commentary," Book 25, which highly technical and analytical work furnishes the following translation: "When ye have fasted and lamented in the fifth month, and in the seventh month, *now* seventy years, was it for Me, pray, that ye fasted?" What could be more evident than that the seventy years of fasting and mourning had just *then* been accomplished? For *exactly* seventy times they had observed that fast of the fifth month, and of the seventh month, though they had not fasted from a godly sorrow. It was more in the nature of a selfish regret because of a national calamity.

In the original Hebrew text the word "month" does not appear, as if it read, "When ye have fasted and lamented *in the fifth and seventh*, now seventy years, was it for Me, pray, that ye fasted?" Naturally, in view of the reference to the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months in 8:19, the word "month" would be supplied by the translators after the words "fifth" and "seventh," but in view of the statement found in 2 Kings 25:8, 9, that the Temple was burned on the seventh day of the fifth month, and of the fact that the immediate inquiry was concerning the fast of the fifth month only, it is suggested that this part of the Lord's reply has to do with that fast alone, so as to make it read, "When ye have fasted and lamented *in the fifth month and seventh day*." That would limit the matter to the fast observed by reason of the destruction of the Temple, and this was the chief thing which concerned the people of Bethel at that time when the new Temple was nearing completion. Nevertheless, even by considering the reference to the *two* fasts, those of the fifth and seventh months, our chronological interest would be still exact, for the reason that the calamities of both months took place *in the same year*.--2 Kings 25:8, 25.

THE SEVENTY YEARS MEASURED

Now, in what year was the Temple destroyed? We answer, that it was in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, which was the nineteenth of Nebuchadnezzar, and this we have shown was 588 B.C. It becomes a very simple matter to observe that from 518 B.C. back to 588 B.C. was a space of exactly seventy years. The message came to Zechariah in the ninth month, which was, therefore, after the seventieth observance of the fasts of both the fifth and seventh months. The prophecy, we see, calls attention to this fact that they had fasted and mourned "*now*" or "*even these seventy years.*" What stronger proof could we desire, to show that it was exactly seventy years from the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar's army until the year of the eventful visit from Bethel, 518 B.C. ? Does this not prove that the period from the destruction of the Temple until the reign of Cyrus, 536 B.C., was a shorter period than seventy years? Manifestly it does. On the other hand, how can Zech. 7:3-5 be understood in the light of our previous understanding that it was seventy years from Zedekiah to Cyrus? The representatives from Bethel said that they had wept and mourned and fasted "*these so many years,*" which would reach, of course, right up to that time of speaking. Then the Lord refers to *exactly the same years*, giving their number as seventy--"*even these seventy years.*" *Such* expressions as "these many years" can be understood only as reaching right up to the time of speaking, and not to a by-gone period which terminated back in the past. (See Josh. 14:10 and Luke 15:29.) To interpret otherwise would be a murdering of the King's English.

This chronological statement of Zech. 7:5 is quite independent of any other time measurement, and its primary value to us at this time is to establish a corroborative proof of the date of Zedekiah's overthrow being in the year 588 B.C. There is no dispute concerning the 518 B.C. date, which marks the occasion of the incident recorded in this chapter. It only remains necessary to apply the measuring rod of seventy years backward from 518 B.C. to reach 588 B.C. as the year in which the Temple was destroyed. There is nothing complex or difficult of understanding about this particular measurement. Its very simplicity is amazing, in view of what we have previously held as the length of the period from Zedekiah to Cyrus when we thought it was seventy years instead of fifty-two. Like an old carving accurately chiseled in granite, we needed only to brush away the dust of a faulty translation and read it plainly. Does it not look as though the Lord, our Heavenly Teacher, is indeed making it plain upon tables?

PASTOR RUSSELL ON INTOLERANCE

THE CHIEF SOURCE OF PERSECUTION

"Perils among false brethren."--2 Cor. 11:26.

[Reprint of sermon by Pastor Russell]

PAUL was remarkable in many respects, but chiefly for his loving devotion to the Master and His cause. His faithfulness brought also many trying experiences. In our context he enumerated some of these. He served the cause of Christ to such an extent that many thought him unwise, and counted him a fool. This service brought him stripes, whippings, as a disturber of the peace, not that he *did* disturb the peace, but that those who opposed

his teachings raised a tumult and blamed him for it, in order to bring him into disrepute, hinder his service and forward their own interests. This at times brought him to prison, too, and even close to death's door.

Nevertheless, the Apostle rejoiced in all such privileges. He declared that five times he received whippings, stripes; once he was stoned, and three times he was shipwrecked. But none of these things moved him from faithfulness to his Master, whose servants he had persecuted before his eyes were opened. Then he recounts various perils experienced from waters, from robbers, from the Jews, from the heathen--in the city, in the wilderness, on the sea. He winds up the list of perils in the words of our text, "Perils among false brethren."

One question which will arise in many minds is "Were these sufferings--stripes, perils, etc.-- deserved?" If asked, the answer would surely be that they were *not* deserved; for St. Paul was a noble character and bore the Message of God's grace in Christ--"good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people." The next question with some would be, "If his sufferings were not punishments, what were they?"

We reply that they were the same as were the Master's--evidences of his loyalty to God and of the darkness of the world, which led them to oppose him. The declaration, "Whosoever will live godly will suffer persecution," was fully exemplified in his own experiences and in the Master's. The amount of suffering as a reward for well-doing marked the measure of loyalty and zeal, and the measure of hatred and malice aroused by the Adversary. The answer to the question as to why Jesus suffered is the answer to all such questions in respect to St. Paul and all other footstep followers.

DARKNESS HATES THE LIGHT

The Master declared that He stood for the principles of light, righteousness, Truth; while Satan stands for the reverse--darkness, superstition, blindness. And so it is with the followers of Jesus. They must all be children of the light, must walk in the light, must be uncompromising in their attitude toward sin and all that is wrong. Therefore the world will hate them and say all manner of evil against them falsely. Yea, men will feel that they do God service when they slay the righteous, whether literally, as in Jesus' case and St. Paul's, or by "shooting out arrows, even bitter words," as is the more popular method of the present time.--Psa. 64:3.

But some one will say, "Ah, times have changed! Today our bishops and popes and preachers are all revered. No one thinks of persecuting them. Rather all men speak well of them. Any one not spoken well of today must be in some way unworthy." How strange that we should forget, and argue along these lines! Were there not Doctors of Divinity in Jesus' day? Were there not priests and chief priests and Levites then? And were there not Pharisees who made long prayers in the Temple? And were they not highly spoken of and revered? Did they not make broad their phylacteries? Did any one think of traducing *them*? No, indeed!

But the *Master* was there and His disciples; and they were not of the popular clergy. By their own record they were styled "the filth and off-scouring of the earth;" and, as the Master said, whoever persecuted them thought that he did God service. How apt we all are to think of our own day as being different from other periods! So it was in Jesus' day. As He told some of them, "Ye garnish the sepulchers of those whom your fathers slew, yet ye do their works." So today many extol the Lord and the Apostles, and denounce their persecutors, while they similarly persecute.--Luke 11:47, 48.

The climax of St. Paul's perils, the severest of them all, was from false brethren. How strange that seems! One would think that however much the heathen or the Jews might have persecuted him, at least all professed followers of Jesus would have thanked God for his example and ministry, and have esteemed him. But this was not so; and as we took back to the Master before him, we see the same to be true. As He declared, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

The Master was a Jew. The Jews were His brethren according to the flesh; and it was they that hated Him without a cause--they that persecuted Him--they that said, "He hath a devil and is mad"--they that "took up stones to stone Him"--they that finally crucified Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," except a few saintly, elect ones.--John 10:20, 31;1:11.

St. Paul also had persecution from the Jews, who repeatedly sought his life. He lived after the establishment of the Church. He had also Christian brethren, begotten of the Holy Spirit and fellow-members of the Body of Christ. Jesus had none such. "Of the people there was none with Him."--Isa. 63:3.

The Holy Spirit was not given until Pentecost; hence Jesus could not receive *Christian* persecution. The nearest approximation was the case of Judas. But if St. Paul enjoyed the sweetness of Christian fellowship in his study, labors and toils, he also knew the bitterness of opposition and persecutions from false brethren the climax of his perils. We may be sure that such experiences were more difficult for him to bear than any others, because they came closer home. They came from brethren of the closest imaginable relationship--fellow-members of the Body of Christ.

THE GODLY SUFFER PERSECUTION

As we glance down through this Gospel Age, from St. Paul's day to the present, we find that all followers of Jesus have had experiences such as He foretold for them--persecutions. We find that these persecutions have come from every quarter, but none, apparently, more severe, more cruel, more perilous, than those which have come from Christian brethren. It is scarcely necessary for us to refer to history to demonstrate this fact. Disputes between Christians have been very bitter. Thousands have lost their lives at each other's hands. The word *heretic* became more obnoxious than any other term in the dictionary.

Neither Catholic nor Protestant can deny the terrible story of the pages of history. All true men are ashamed of the record. All are ready to say "*We* would not so have done. "Monuments stand in various parts of the world, marking places where sectarian strife has manifested itself in atrocious, barbarous acts. Our Catholic friends blush at the story of the Huguenots. Our Church of England friends blush at the story of the Covenanters and other non-conformists. Our Presbyterian friends, in turn, blush for atrocious acts of injustice, etc., done in the name of Calvinism.

We might also say that each denomination in its turn has been a subject of persecution from one and another. Baptists were publicly whipped--sometimes driven from their homes to exile. So were the Puritans, who afterwards became persecutors themselves. The Methodists also suffered from sectarian spite and jealousy,

ignorance and superstition. Indeed, who will dispute that Christendom has *good cause* to be ashamed of her own record, no matter what her standpoint may be?

Thank God for the advancement made along the line of human sympathy! No longer can civilized people take pleasure in public executions, tortures, burning at the stake, as in former times. Whatever competition may remain between Christian brethren, the peril is not that of open persecution; for general sentiment has advanced beyond the point where physical torture could be tolerated by the masses.

We have come to the time when Calvinists erect a monument to Servetus, expressing dissent from their great leader's mistake in causing a Christian brother to be burned. We have come to the place where the "perils among false brethren" are of a different kind. Now whatever jealousies or rivalries there may be, either at home or in the mission fields, are recognized as improper and suppressed, so far as brethren connected with popular and influential bodies of Christians are concerned.

But is it not true today that the Truth is unpopular? Has this not always been the fact? Is it not true that in proportion as the denominations have become popular they have escaped persecution? But woe be to those who are unpopular, as were Jesus and the Apostles! If they indeed escape the cross, the guillotine, the rack and the fagot, they are amenable to other means of torture. Something can be trumped up against their personality. Insinuations can be given by word and look, and shrug of shoulder. More damage can be accomplished in this way than in any outward attack.

Evil speaking, evil surmising, slanders, ambiguous suggestions, etc.--all, as torture--can be applied to the followers of Jesus today. And all who today take such a course are sharers with the malefactors, even though they do not indulge in physical torture. Who can dispute that sometimes *mental* torture is equally severe? In our day there are other and more refined ways of persecuting, torturing, open to false brethren, than imprisonment or crucifixion or burning.

And what shall we say of the false brethren who do such things? And how shall we assure ourselves that we shall not be of them? Undoubtedly the Master is still of the same mind as St. John expressed when he declared, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15.) Murderers may indeed receive severe stripes, and eventually learn better under Messiah's Kingdom; but no one of a murderous condition of heart, seeking to do evil to a brother, could possibly be of suitable character to be a joint-heir with his Master in the Kingdom.--1 Cor. 6:9-11.

"ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE"

In every time, and now, the spirit of persecution naturally would strike most prominently certain leading figures; nevertheless, even as Jesus' words implied, all lovers of righteousness are to have more or less share in such experiences of opposition. St. Paul mentions this, saying, "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock . . . and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." (Heb. 10:32, 33.) Jesus gives us the same thought in His declaration that whosoever shall offend one of the least of these, His disciples, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.--Matt. 18:6.

This, of course, is highly figurative language, and yet it must have a special meaning. It must mean that the Lord has a special care over all of His consecrated saints; and that no matter how poor, how weak, how ignorant, they may be, the very least of His followers are supervised, and injury to the least is punishable. Of course, there would still be an awakening from the dead for the one who was drowned in the sea; and so there are possibilities of help and recovery for those who would stumble the Lord's "little ones." Nevertheless, the intimation is that of drastic punishment. This would not mean anything like we once supposed eternal torment--but some just recompense of reward for every evil deed.--2 Peter 2:9.

From this standpoint we may readily assume that considerable satisfaction of justice is necessary; for surely a considerable number of the Lord's "little ones" have suffered persecution. And as we have seen, not all of this persecution lies at the door of the world. Much of it lies at the door of the professed Church of Christ--"false brethren."--Isa. 66:5; Matt. 7:21-23.

Speaking of some such, Jesus once declared that they would have great disappointment when the time of rewards would come. He says, "Many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name. . . and done many wonderful works? And I will declare, I do not recognize you." They will not be worthy of the Lord's recognition as amongst His Elect Church, His Bride class. We shall be glad if they will be found worthy of some blessing under His Kingdom. But there will be great disappointment to them. They missed the greater point of the Gospel-*Love*.

LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN

The Lord's will concerning all His followers is that they should love one another as He loved them. St. John expressed this sentiment, saying that as Jesus loved the Church and laid down His life for the Church, so also His followers should lay down their lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16.) If this is the *love standard* that the Lord has set for His people, how sorely some will soon be disappointed in respect to His will if they have ignored this requirement. If, instead of loving the brethren and laying down their lives for them, they say all manner of evil against them, etc., what then? Then they are false brethren. Then they are the peril of the true brethren.

Oh, how much the true followers of Jesus need to impress upon themselves this great lesson--that love does no ill to his neighbor, that love is sympathetic, suffereth long and is kind, vaunteth not itself, it not puffed up, seeketh not merely its own interest and welfare, but seeketh the interest and welfare of others!

The supreme test of our loyalty to God is our love for Him. And this love is manifested by our desire to do those things acceptable to Him. There is little that we really can do for the Almighty. He is so great and we are so small! But if we have His spirit of Love, then we shall love all those who love Him. And our conduct toward them will demonstrate the real sentiment of our hearts. Thus seen, we are daily making our reward in the Lord's sight, daily showing Him to what degree we are worthy or unworthy of His great reward.

Those mentioned in our text as false brethren were perilous to the true brethren, but did not get into this position immediately. It was a growth, a development. The wrong spirit gradually supplanted the right. It is well that Christians note this insidious canker which gnaws at the root of brotherly love, tends to poison the spirit and to bring forth the evil fruitage mentioned. Apparently, in some cases, the spirit of pride, the spirit of sectarianism, the spirit of ambition, are the leading features of the wrong course, which, if permitted to go to the heart, will develop a bad fruitage, such as we are discussing. It will produce false brethren, persecuting brethren, blind to the real spirit of their Master, heady, high-minded.--Jude 11; Gen. 4:6, 7.

Let us then, beloved, be more and more on guard against the encroachments of the Adversary upon us as New Creatures! Let us be more and more zealous for the Spirit of our Master and show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! In no way can we better show forth these praises than by exemplifying in our daily conduct the lessons we have learned of Him!

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

--JULY 16--DAN. 5:1-31--

Golden Text.--"God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."--Eccl. 12:14.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S kingdom, although very prosperous, and wealthy by the gathering of the spoils of centuries from the great surrounding nations, was of short duration. Secular history mentions the father of Nebuchadnezzar as the founder of new Babylonia, and quite a number of Bible students have thus been misled to reckon the "Times of the Gentiles" as beginning before Nebuchadnezzar's time, in the days of Nabopolassar. But while it is doubtless true that that monarch was prominently identified with the organization of Babylonia, the "Times of the Gentiles" could not have begun in his day, for the reason that it is expressly explained that this world dominion which started the Times of the Gentiles was given to Nebuchadnezzar in the beginning of his reign, and in fulfilment of this lease of world power Nebuchadnezzar assumed control of all nations, including the Jews, and these with others were vassals from that point forward. Nineteen years later, in Zedekiah's day, the Jewish kingdom even as a vassalage was entirely removed and Jerusalem destroyed. We should keep in mind that the "Times of the Gentiles" merely means the times or years in which the world's affairs are delivered over to Gentile supremacy, between the time the kingdom of Babylon assumed control and the time of the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. This Bible view of the matter is further confirmed by the fact that the ruins of Babylon show the name of Nebuchadnezzar on the bricks of the principal palaces, and thus give evidence that it was under his administration that the empire reached its zenith, or became, in the language of the dream, the golden head of the image, which represented Gentile dominion.--Dan. 2:38.

Secular history seems to give the name of Nabonidus as king of Babylon at the time of its fall, but the Scriptures make no mention of this name, giving us instead Belshazzar, denominating him the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Two explanations are possible: Belshazzar may have been the son of Nabonidus and the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, or Nabonidus may have been his original name, and Belshazzar a name adopted when he assumed the office of king; or reversely, Belshazzar may have been his original name, and the one by which Daniel and the people at home would speak of him, while Nabonidus may have been the name he assumed officially as king. At all events the name that appears on the tablets is Nabonidus, while the name which Daniel gives repeatedly is Belshazzar, a name of the same signification as that given to Daniel, who was called

Belteshazzar, both words signifying "Favored of God." We can safely hold to the Scriptural account, assured that time will justify our confidence in this, as it has done in other matters.

MISUSED OPPORTUNITIES AND WEALTH

At the time of our lesson, Babylon, the capital city of Babylonia, was the most wonderful city in the world. The following observations respecting it are from the pens of others. "Nebuchadnezzar converted his capital, Babylon, into one of the most magnificent and beautiful cities of antiquity." "Herodotus, who visited it about B.C. 450 [nearly a century after the date covered by our lesson], while its walls and buildings were still perfect, describes it as forming a square of nearly fourteen miles on each side." "The walls surrounding the city, according to Herodotus, were three hundred feet high and eighty feet broad. A hundred gates, with their great posts, leaves and sills of brass, and their bars of iron, permitted entrance to the city." "Such a city was never seen before, and was the work of Nebuchadnezzar. The bricks marked with his name, and the inscriptions which he wrote, being hidden in the ruins, have now come forth from their grave as witnesses to the truth of God's Word." "In those days Babylon was the metropolis of the world, the center of commerce, art and wisdom." "The great plain on which it lay, a paradise of fertility and cultivation, was intersected by countless canals, both small and great, serving alike for irrigation and navigation." "Babylon was a university city. The wealth of the world poured into the coffers of the Babylonian merchants."

Such wealth and prosperity were likely to beget luxurious ease on the part of the Babylonians, as they also excited the cupidity and ambition of enemies. Accordingly, the Medes and, Persians had consolidated; and their army under Cyrus for several months had been besieging Babylon, whose citizens, however, felt quite secure behind their immense walls, and amply provisioned for a longer siege than it was supposed any army could enforce. So great was the confidence of the king of Babylon in the strength of his capital that he made a great feast to a thousand of his lords.

This feast would seem to have been in the nature of a boast in the greatness of Babylon; and as though to emphasize his power and to remind his nobles and lords of how none of the gods of the surrounding nations had been able to deliver their peoples out of the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar had called for the vessels of gold and silver brought from the Jewish Temple, and these were profaned by drinking therefrom to the honor of Bel, the god of Babylon.

In the midst of the revelry of the feast, the king, his counsellors and lords were astonished to see a part of a hand writing certain fiery letters upon the wall of the palace. The revelry ceased, a hush of fear came over all; the flush of confidence upon the king's face gave place to one of terror; he trembled and called for the advice of the wise men to interpret the wonderful message, but they were unable to explain the matter satisfactorily. Even if they had deciphered the letters and words, they had no interpretation to offer, because from their standpoint any other meaning than the true meaning would have been more reasonable; nothing would have seemed further from the truth to Babylon's wise men than the message which these miraculously written words conveyed. The king was greatly disappointed, but his mother came to his assistance, informing him of Daniel, who had given to his father, Nebuchadnezzar, an interpretation of a dream, when all the wise men of Babylon had failed, and accordingly Daniel was sent for.

THE NOBLE DANIEL

The aged Prophet, at this time about ninety years of age, as an officer of the kingdom doubtless resided in one of the palace buildings nearby, and in response to the king's command he stood before them. The king, realizing the importance of the message, manifested his anxiety by offering, first to the astrologers, and now to Daniel, a great reward for the interpretation--to be robed in royal purple, with a royal golden chain as insignia of rank, and to be third in dignity and power in the empire. The first thing in the lesson which strikes us is the nobility of God's servant, in renouncing all claim to these gifts as a reward for the service of interpreting God's message. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known the interpretation."

We may stop here long enough to take a valuable lesson, to the effect that all who would be the mouthpieces of the Lord, and speak forth His Word, should, like Daniel, do so without stipulation of compensation. Only from this standpoint can any hope to be entirely free and untrammelled in speaking words of truth and soberness which may be very distasteful to those who inquire the mind of the Lord. Had Daniel thanked the king for the promised gifts, and thus accepted them as a reward for his service, he would have felt obligated to the king to such an extent that it might have warped his judgment, or have weakened his expression of the Lord's message. And the king in turn would have felt that, having paid for the information, it should be a smooth, favorable message. And just so it is with some of the Lord's true servants in mystic Babylon. They have the opportunity presented to speak the Lord's Word; yet many of them are handicapped by reason of having received honors and robes, and are more or less inclined to hide and cover the message now due to Babylon in this its Laodicean epoch. They are bound by the chain of gold around their necks.--Rev. 3:14-22.

DANIEL READS DOOM OF BABYLON

The aged Prophet displayed gentleness as well as fearlessness in the delivery of his message. It was stated as kindly as the truth would permit, but the truth was not withheld by reason of fear. He recounted to the king his father's exaltation to power, and ascribed it not to the god of Babylon, but to the God of Israel. He reminded him, of how pride had been his father's downfall, resulting in his degradation to bestial conditions for seven times (seven years--corresponding to the seven times, i.e., 2520 years, of Gentile domination). He reminded Belshazzar of how in the end his father had acknowledged the God of heaven as the real ruler amongst men, and then he charged home to the king that instead of profiting by this experience, of which he well knew, he had lifted up his heart to pride, had ignored the only true God, and have even brought what he knew were the sacred vessel, of Jehovah's service, to profane them in the worship and glorification of idols--"gods of silver, gold, brass, iron, wood and stone, which see not nor hear nor know." He pointed out to the king that he had thus dishonored and defied "the God in whose hand [power] thy breath is [the God of all life--Acts 17:28, 29], and whose are all thy ways [who has full power to control your course]." This true God be had not glorified, but dishonored.

By thus kindly but plainly showing the king the truth, the Prophet prepared the way for the exposition of the, fateful words--"Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." *Mene* was repeated twice, probably for the sake of emphasis--Numbered! Numbered!--the limit of the time of your dominion has expired. *Tekel*--short weight, lacking. *Peres* signifies divided, and its plural form, *Upharsin*, gives the thought of broken or crushed into pieces--destroyed. Nothing in the word *peres* signifies Medes and Persians, but the Prophet knew from the

interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision that the Babylonian dominion would be followed by the Medo-Persian kingdom, and he also knew that the Medes and Persians were already besieging the city.

So far from being offended with the plain words of the Prophet, Belshazzar seems to have felt their truth, and gave command that the honors already promised should be bestowed upon Daniel. But meantime other matters were transpiring in his capital, of which the king and his lords were unaware, so that the fulfilment of the doom written upon the palace wall was close at hand.

While the Babylonians were feasting and reveling in fancied security, Cyrus, the general of the united forces of the Medes and Persians, having studied up a plan of attack, had already caused a great ditch to be dug above the city, to divert the waters of the River Euphrates into a new channel. This river flowed through the center of Babylon diagonally, and was protected by enormous gates of brass, which were supposed to be equally as impregnable as the three-hundred-foot wall. Indeed, it would appear that the Babylonians had never a fear of attack from the river, and had left it comparatively unguarded; consequently, when Cyrus had diverted the stream into the new channel he found little difficulty in marching his troops under the brass gates into the city, so that at the very time the revelry was progressing in Belshazzar's palace, the soldiers of Cyrus were taking possession of the entire city, and very shortly after Daniel's interpretation of the writing the troops reached the palace, Belshazzar was slain, and the new empire of Medo-Persia was inaugurated--"without fighting," as the tablets declare. Thus did great Babylon fall suddenly--"in one hour."

MYSTIC BABYLON THAT GREAT CITY

The thoughtful Bible student must of necessity have always in view the many correspondencies which the Scriptures institute between literal Babylon and mystic Babylon, and when studying the account of the fall of literal Babylon, his attention is naturally drawn also to the foretold fall of mystic Babylon in the end of this Age. Indeed, he must be comparatively blind who cannot see that the wonderful prophecies which speak of the fall of Babylon (Isa. 14:22; Jer. 50 and 51) were not wholly fulfilled by Cyrus the Persian. The fall of literal Babylon, while it was sudden, and while it made a great commotion amongst the nations, lacks much of filling to the full the prophetic picture. Much of the prophecy still waits for fulfilment in mystic or symbolic Babylon today; and this fact is abundantly supported by the prophecies of the Book of Revelation, written centuries after the fall of literal Babylon, which unmistakably refer to symbolic Babylon, and use language almost identical with that of Jeremiah.--See Rev. 16:19-18:24.

It will be noticed, further, that, as literal Babylon sat upon the literal River Euphrates, so mystic Babylon is said to sit upon the waters, peoples. It should be noticed, also, that as the literal city was captured by the diversion of the literal waters, so symbolic Babylon is to fall by reason of the diversion of the symbolic Euphrates, which in Rev. 16:12, it is foretold, shall be "dried up--that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared."

The kings of the east, or kings from the sunrising, are, we understand, the kings of Christ's Kingdom, who are also priests--the Body of Christ, the Royal Priesthood. "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." From this standpoint of view, Cyrus and his army, overthrowing literal Babylon, was a figure or illustration of Messiah, King of kings and Lord of lords, who with His faithful will shortly overthrow mystic Babylon, and take possession of the world in the name of Jehovah, to establish the Kingdom

for which He taught us to pray, "Our Father . . . , Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

AGAIN THE HANDWRITING IS ON THE WALL

This likeness of Cyrus to Messiah is not merely in the particulars noted., It should be remembered that the name of Cyrus signifies "the sun," and that thus in his name he reminds us of the prophecy of Christ--"The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams." Moreover, there were sundry very remarkable prophecies respecting Cyrus, made long before he had come into prominence. Through the Prophet Isaiah (44:28) the Lord speaks of Cyrus as His shepherd who would lead back Israel, and again (45:1-4) He calls him His anointed, saying, "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, Jehovah, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me." In this prophecy Cyrus is evidently indicated, and yet just as evidently a greater than he is indirectly referred to, viz., the Prince of the kings of the earth, who in Revelation is shown as drying up the symbolic Euphrates and destroying symbolic Babylon, and delivering spiritual Israel. And the time for the fulfilment of the symbol is clearly indicated, by the drying up of the Euphrates under the sixth vial of the "Day of Wrath:" and the fall of Babylon under the seventh vial, resulting in the liberty of all God's people from the thralldom, through false doctrine, which has been upon them for to, these many years, is portrayed as resulting.

Babylon literally fell because, when tried in the balances by the Lord, she was found wanting; mystic Babylon falls for a similar reason. Literal Babylon never was Israel, but the Israelites were for a time swallowed up in Babylon; likewise, mystic Babylon never was spiritual Israel, though for a long time spiritual Israel has been in captivity to mystic Babylon. As the same Cyrus who overthrew literal Babylon made the proclamation which permitted literal Israel to return from captivity, so it is the King of kings who, upon taking His great power as earth's new King, will set free all the Lord's people; and in advance, He sends the message to those who have ears to hear, saying: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of demons and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird . . . Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of *her* sins, and that ye receive not of *her* plagues."--Rev. 18:2-4.

The great feast which preceded the fall of Babylon would seem to correspond well with the great denominational union expected soon, and the season of rejoicing which will accompany it. The gold and silver vessels of, the Lord's house which were profaned may fitly represent not only the precious truths of Divine revelation, but also the Lord's consecrated people the golden vessels representing the "little flock," and the more numerous silver vessels representing the "great company." What may be the character of the defilement and injury of these is of course problematical, but in any case we remember that those consecrated vessels were all highly honored, and restored to the Temple by Cyrus, and likewise we know that not only the truths of Divine revelation will all be cared for by our Lord, but also that all who are His will be glorified in the spiritual Temple which He will rear shortly.

DANIEL AND THE LIONS

--JULY 23--DAN. 6:1-28--

Golden Text.--"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions."--Heb. 11 :33.

NOTHING gives us a higher opinion of the kings of ancient times, their willingness to recognize character and merit wherever it might be found, than does the record furnished in the Book of Daniel. If we were surprised at Nebuchadnezzar's impartial treatment of his captives, in the selection of Daniel and his companions, and their education and advancement in the kingdom; if we were surprised that the king so greatly honored Daniel for the interpretation of a dream; if we were surprised that, when convinced that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were servants of the true God, Nebuchadnezzar gave them still higher positions in the empire; and if we were surprised that Belshazzar took no offence at Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall, but highly honored and rewarded him for his faithful, plain, outspoken words--we are still more surprised to find that King Darius of the Medes and Persians, so far from destroying all the rulers of Babylon, including Daniel, apparently spared all except the king alive, and gave Daniel a very high position in the empire. We may reasonably assume that, although God's providence was in the matter of Daniel's preferment, nevertheless there was some creditable generosity in those heathen kings, as well as some natural ability and good quality manifested by the Prophet Daniel.

As one of the three presidents of the empire, and having charge over a hundred and twenty of its provinces, Daniel stood in the way of many who sought office, and, as a man of unimpeachable character, no doubt he stood in the way of many schemes for the plundering of the treasury; for such public plundering and dishonesty, said to be very general throughout Eastern countries today, was probably so then to a large extent. For these selfish reasons, Daniel was sure to have a host of secret enemies, who sought his downfall. From the narrative we might suppose that these enemies, many of whom would be prominent in official life, had watched in vain to find any real cause of complaint, and that they finally concluded that, if fault would be found at all, it must be on account of his religion.

How this reminds us of the Apostle's testimony, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and again, our Lord's words, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you!" (2 Tim. 3:12; John 15:19.) Even where there are no selfish motives to impel the persecution, there is ever present the distinction between "light" and "darkness:" and the fact noticed by all is mentioned by our Lord--that all who are themselves of the darkness hate the light and all who walk in the light. (John 3:19-21.) Some one has truly said, "Whosoever does well and is faithful and true, while others are dishonest and false, must expect to be opposed and hated. Every effort will be made to injure his character, to drag him into the mire, and to make it appear that he is no better than those who assail him. Envy is sharper than a serpent's tooth, and deadlier than the poison of asps."

Shakespeare has truly said:

"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,

Thou shalt not escape calumny.

"That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect;

For slander's mark was ever yet the fair;
So thou be good, slander doth yet approve
Thy worth the greater."

Sometimes we speak of the snares that are laid for the feet of God's servants as fixed by Satan, their great Adversary, and this may be so, at least by supervision, and yet apparently there are some so fully imbued with the spirit of their "father, the devil," that his nefarious schemes and plots seem to come quite naturally to them. And thus it was with Daniel's enemies, who sought his ruin. Very skillfully they counseled with the king respecting the necessity that the people should recognize him as a god, and urged this as essential to the enforcement of obedience to the king's commands amongst his new subjects. The theory of the empire was that the king's person was specially possessed by Ormuzd, the deity of the empire, that his word was therefore representatively the word of that god, and that therefore all of his decrees were infallible and inviolable, even by himself. Taking advantage of this law of the Medes and Persians, that no decree could be altered or abrogated, these plotters succeeded in having the king set apart thirty days in which it should be a crime to offer a petition or worship to any other person or god save to Darius himself.

We are not to suppose that the king had so false an idea of his own personal consequence, nor that these his officers entertained the view that he was an infallible god: rather, it was a matter which they suggested as a piece of statecraft, a fraud upon the people, justified, in their perverted judgments, by the greater peace and security from the prevalence of such a superstitious reverence for the king and his laws. The false reasoning was of the Jesuitical sort, which says, An evil or a falsehood is justified if beneficial results are hoped for--the same false principle which operates in the minds of many intelligent preachers who, while thoroughly disbelieving in the doctrine of eternal torment themselves, countenance and encourage, or at least do not discourage, a belief in the falsehood on the part of their hearers; hoping that the prevalent superstition on the subject may prove a restraint upon the masses.

Having obtained the king's signature to the new law, the conspirators exulted in the thought that Daniel at last was in their grasp, and already practically destroyed. They seem to have known the man's character so well as not to doubt that he would be faithful to his religious convictions, and thus furnish them all the opportunity desired for his apprehension. And it was so. After the matter was proclaimed as law, as having had the king's signet, Daniel worshiped as before, kneeling three times a day before the Lord in prayer, thanksgiving and supplication--with his windows open toward Jerusalem, his expectations bright with hope in the Lord's promises, and especially with the thought that now the seventy years of Jerusalem's desolation were about fulfilled, and that very soon Cyrus, according to the prophecy, would become king, and send back the covenanted people to the land of promise.

We are not informed why Daniel had adopted a habit of private worship in so public a manner as to be generally known to the people--a manner so different from that which the Lord commended to the household of faith of this Gospel Age, saying, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet [secret apartment], and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to the Father which is in secret." (Matt. 6:6.) Quite probably the custom of Babylon was such as to make Daniel's more open course the reasonable and proper one. Possibly all worship was more or less public or visible, and for Daniel to have worshiped in secret might have been misunderstood to mean that he did not worship at all; while to worship as he did, not before an idol, but with his face toward Jerusalem, the typical city of God, and its Temple, the typical habitation of God, the great King, would be his standing confession of God

before the various nationalities of Babylon, including his own people, the Jews, who would need just such an illustration of faithfulness to the true God and separation from idolatry.

Daniel was not satisfied to merely close his eyes in prayer after he had retired to rest, as do many people living under the greater light of this Gospel Age, and under greater privileges and opportunities and grander promises. He had a great God who was worthy of reverence and worship, and he was great enough as a man to appreciate that it was a privilege to have intercourse and fellowship with his Creator. He was not only not ashamed to bow the knee to the Almighty, but was unwilling to assume a less humble position before God than he and others assumed toward earthly kings. Our judgment is that it is impossible for any Christian, to maintain a proper consistent walk in life, and to build up such a character and faith structure as are represented by the Apostle as composed of "gold, silver and precious stones," without prayer; more than this, without regularity in prayer--we would almost be inclined to say, without *kneeling* in prayer: and we believe that the experiences and testimonies of the truest and best of the Lord's people who have ever lived will corroborate this.

One of the points of the Adversary's attack, surest to have a baneful influence, is along this line. When the Lord's people become overcharged with the cares of this life, instead of realizing their danger and seeking the help of the Lord to order the affairs of life differently, the suggestion comes that they are too weary to pray, or that another time will be more favorable: or perhaps they are so fully engrossed that reverence and acknowledgment to the Lord, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, is entirely forgotten: or perhaps sin lieth at the door, and they seek not to think of the Lord, and therefore avoid the throne of grace: or perhaps coldness has come in from some other cause, and the Lord seems afar off, and prayer becomes a mere formality and is by and by abandoned. The child of God who is in a proper condition of heart-harmony will desire to commune with his Creator--not only to hear His Word, but also to offer thanksgiving and worship, as surely as he will desire natural food and drink for the sustenance of his natural body. Whoever has not this experience should seek it; and, according to our Lord's promise, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

According to a preconcerted arrangement, the conspirators assembled themselves at the proper time to be witnesses of Daniel's devotion to the true God, and then proceeded to the king to announce that the first one to disobey his decree, and therefore to come under its punishment, was the aged, honored and trusted President of a hundred and twenty provinces of the empire, Daniel. The king was sorely displeased with himself: evidently he had not thought of Daniel, and of the possibility of such results following his decree. He had been advised to make it; it had seemed to flatter him; he had yielded to the urgent representations of the supposedly well-intentioned and wise men; and now he discerned that he had been deliberately led into a trap for the very purpose of destroying his most valued counselor, of whom, evidently, he had not thought to ask advice before signing the decree.

MAY THY GOD DELIVER THEE

The king sought every possible way to make void the decree or to excuse Daniel from its penalty; but the conspirators were close at hand with arguments to prove that such a course would be contrary to the usages of the nation; that it would mean the undermining of the authority of the king and the loss of confidence in his decrees by the people; and he found no escape from his dilemma: his counselors even seemed to threaten the stability of his throne themselves, assuring him that "no decree *may* be changed." Finally the king commanded

that Daniel be brought and cast into the den of lions, expressing to Daniel, however, the hope, "May thy God, whom thou servest continually, deliver thee." The exemplary conduct of Daniel, previously and at this time, had its effect upon the king, as expressed by the word, "*continually*." He had confidence that God was with Daniel, and that the God whom Daniel so sincerely worshiped and so intelligently trusted, must be more powerful than all other gods. Such should be the lesson of every Christian life, one which would testify not only to his own character and faithfulness to God, but one also which would testify to the good character and faithfulness of the God whom he worships.

The conspirators were bent on having matters thoroughly accomplished, and hence the stone (which covered the den and was probably fastened to its place with an iron bar) was doubly sealed with wax, to prove that it was not tampered with one seal was the king's, the other that of the lords of the empire, who were amongst the conspirators, so that there might be no subsequent alteration of the conditions or delivery of Daniel during the night. If the lions were not very hungry at the moment Daniel was first cast in, it was reckoned that they would certainly become so before morning. How the hearts of these evil men longed for the death of a good man, who had done them no injury--except as his life may have been a living epistle, contradictory to theirs, or as he may have thwarted some of their efforts to do evil!

It is very much to the king's honor that we read that he was so troubled in mind that he could not sleep, but spent the night fasting, and very early in the morning made haste to the den 'to see whether or not Daniel's God had delivered him.' So amongst the friends and neighbors of a true Christian are some who know and appreciate God only as they know and appreciate the Christian character.

The king's words, as he approached the den, were a wonderful tribute to Daniel's faithfulness as a servant of God. "Is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?" The king here associated, and that properly, Daniel's faithful service to God with his hope respecting God's faithfulness to Daniel. And this reminds us of the words of the Apostle (I John 3:22), "And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Compare John 8:29.

The heart of Darius was glad as he heard Daniel's voice saluting him, assuring him of his safety; and he at once caused him to be delivered from the den. Daniel expressed one reason for the Lord's deliverance, in the words, "Before Him innocency was found in me--as also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." We note the fact that haughtiness and bravado are wholly lacking in the Prophet's announcement of the great favor of God manifested on his behalf. There is a lesson here which many of the Lord's people need to learn; namely, that, having done their part, they are not to boast of it, nor to parade their sanctity, nor to speak exultingly of the results, as though they were of their own achievement, but are simply, like Daniel, to give the glory to God.

The expression, "God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths," need not be understood literally to signify that an angel was personally present and literally prevented the lions from opening their mouths; for though such a course would be entirely possible, we are to understand the term, angel, in a general way to signify any power or agency which God might employ, and the expression, "shutting of the lions' mouths," would simply signify that they had been restrained from doing violence to Daniel. Nor would we question that an angel of the Lord could have been with Daniel, and kept him company in the den, if such were the will of God; but the presence or absence of an angel was not essential to the Divine protection granted.

Not many of the Lord's people are cast into dens of literal lions, and yet at times quite a good many of them have had experiences which strongly resemble this--as for instance, the Apostle Paul, in recounting his experiences, mentions perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by his own countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, and caps the climax in the specification of "perils amongst *false brethren*." (2 Cor. 11 :26.) It is possible for human mouths to do us more harm than the mouths of brute beasts; the Apostle James points this out when he says: "Behold, how small a fire enkindles a great forest! And the tongue is a fire in the world of unrighteousness. The tongue is established among our members as the one which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of life, and it is enkindled of Gehenna; for every species, both of wild beasts and of birds and of reptiles and of sea creatures, is tamable and has been tamed by the human race; but the tongue of men no man is able to subdue. It is an irrestrainable evil, full of death-producing poison."--James 3:6-8.

As God's providence was over Daniel, permitting him to come under the power of natural wild beasts, and making this a test of his fidelity to God and to principles of righteousness, so the Lord's providence sometimes permits His faithful ones to be exposed to the venom and malice and hate and misrepresentation and slander of human tongues, far more vicious and far more terrible every way than the wild beasts of the jungle, which can harm but for a moment. Nevertheless, as the Lord was able to deliver Daniel, He is not less able to send His angel (His providences) to shut the mouths of those who would do injury to His people. They may gnash upon them with their teeth, as the lions may have been permitted to do to Daniel, to test his faith in the Lord; yet we are to remember that all things are subject to Him with whom we have to do, and whose service we have entered through vows of consecration.

In some instances it may please the Lord to grant a wonderful deliverance, as in the case of Daniel, while in other instances the providential dealings may result otherwise, as for instance in Stephen's case: his plain but kind statement of the truth to his Jewish brethren "cut them to the heart," and "they *gnashed on him with their teeth*, and cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. . . . And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." But even in such a case the victory was with the Lord's servant, of whom we read, "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God." And the record further is that Stephen, in the midst of such persecution, had the peace of God which passeth all understanding, to such an extent that his face was "as the face of an angel"--serene, calm, unperturbed.--Acts 6:15; 7:54-60.

The Scriptural record is that after Daniel's deliverance King Darius caused all the conspirators to be cast into the den of lions, and that thus they were all destroyed. Josephus adds something from tradition, to the effect that, when Daniel was delivered the conspirators claimed that his preservation was due to the fact that some one had fed the lions before he was cast into the den, and that the king undertook to demonstrate the matter by having the lions liberally fed, and then casting into the den those who had conspired against Daniel, who were speedily devoured.

This reminds us of how Haman was hanged upon the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The Psalmist seeing to speak of it as a principle associated with the Divine government, that those who dig pits for others are likely to fall therein themselves. (Psa. 7:15, 16; 9:15, 16.) And who has not observed that those who gnash upon others with the tongue of scandal and falsehood, envy and malice, are likely in the end to be injured by the very falsehood and bitter words wherewith they seek to injure others? There is a law of retribution at work, in accordance with which a recompense of evil is dealt out to all evil-doers, either in the present life or in the life to come.

THE FIRST RETURN FROM EXILE

--JULY 30--JER. 29:10-14; EZRA 1:1-11--

Golden Text.--"We know that to them that love God all things work together for good."--Rom. 8:28.

JEREMIAH'S twenty-ninth chapter is a letter which he wrote to the exiles in Babylon. This letter is "the nearest analogue to be found in the Old Testament to the Epistles which form so large a part of the New."--Samuel Cox. The purpose of the letter was to assure them that, in spite of the false prophets who were foretelling a speedy return, they should remain in captivity seventy years. No shorter period would suffice to teach Israel the lessons it needed to learn from this bitter experience. But they were not to despair, for at the end of the seventh decade the nation would surely be restored to its own land. Professor Beecher dates the letter B.C. 595, in the second year of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, the first deportation having taken place ten years before and the second three years before.

This prophecy contains some of the most eloquent sentences of Holy Writ. The Jews might think that God had forgotten them, "but I," said Jehovah, "know My thoughts toward My people, and they are thoughts that seek their peace and not their evil, their hope and not their despair. The days are coming when your hard hearts, that have so often turned toward senseless idols, will turn again to your loving Father. Nor will you turn in vain. *Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.*" That last sentence is the great promise to prayer, good for all ages and all peoples. It is the climax of the prophecy. To find God is the reward of all search, and compared with that the promise of a turn of their captivity back to their homeland is only a slight thing. Having found God, any country would be their homeland.

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are not prophetic, but historical; they take up the history of Israel where it was laid down by the scribes who wrote the Books of Chronicles. Ezra, the writer of the book bearing his name, was a scribe or educated man, whose genealogy is traced back through the priesthood to Aaron. (Ezra 1-6.) Ezra was not amongst those who went up first to Jerusalem under the proclamation of Cyrus; indeed, he was probably not born until a considerable time after that notable event.

The record of the first six chapters of Ezra covers a period of twenty years; and then an interval of about fifty years transpired before the events recorded in the seventh chapter--Ezra's commission under King Artaxerxes of Persia to go up to Jerusalem and establish the worship of God. The history of the return from captivity, and the experiences of the people and their difficulties in connection with the rebuilding of the Temple, Ezra probably got from the records of the scribes at Jerusalem.

The Book of Second Chronicles closes with the declaration that the king of the Chaldeans, Nebuchadnezzar, carried away the treasures of Jerusalem, broke down its walls, burned its palaces, and carried its people captive to Babylon, and then declares that this period of captivity of the Jews and the desolation of the land and the city was in fulfilment of prophecy, the word of the Lord by Jeremiah, for Jeremiah had predicted that the Jews would go into captivity to the kingdom of Babylon seventy years.(Jer. 25:11.) Those seventy years, commencing with the third year of Jehoiakim in Nebuchadnezzar's first year, 606 B.C., would reach the first year of Cyrus, 536 B.C. More than this, the servitude to the kingdom of Babylon became the occasion also of

bringing in a period of desolation of the land, which began approximately 589 B.C. and extended to about 520 B.C.--Zech. 1 :1, 7, 12; Hag. 2:1, 15-19.

It seems to be no easy matter to determine the chronological order of Medo-Persia. Cyrus is called the Persian, and Darius is called the Mede, and whether they reigned jointly for a time seems difficult to determine. It would appear that Cyrus was in some respects the chief, yet that Darius was the representative of authority in Babylon for a time, and that upon his death Cyrus became sole emperor. Daniel most positively declares that Darius the Mede succeeded to Belshazzar's kingdom (Dan. 5:31; 6:28), and this was before even Daniel had thought to search the prophecy of Jeremiah and to calculate the date when the seventy years of captivity would end, and to pray for the preparation of Israel for the promised deliverance when it should come.--Dan. 9:1-16.

THE LORD STIRRED UP THE HEART OF CYRUS

We are not told by what agencies the Lord operated when He "stirred up" the heart of Cyrus to fulfil His will, in letting go the captives, and hence we are at liberty to surmise on the subject. We presume it likely that, as Daniel was speedily made a high officer in the kingdom, he had access to King Cyrus, and quite probably called his attention to the Scriptural predictions which marked him as the Divine agent, even referring to him by name.-- Isa. 44:26, 28; 45:1-5; Jer. 25:1-12; 29:10.

It is quite possible, also, that the Lord used other means in stirring up the heart of Cyrus: possibly he reflected that by such a course he would firmly establish himself in the good will of the Israelites, who numbered millions amongst his new subjects, and comparatively few of whom he might feel sure would avail themselves of his generous offer of liberty to return to their native land. It would appear that this was the custom of Cyrus in respect to the religions of all the various peoples whom he conquered. Nebuchadnezzar had thought to unify the people by bringing to their minds one god, and compelling worship to him. Cyrus seems to have followed an opposite rule, and sought to make himself popular with his subjects of various religious inclinations by doing something to the honor of every prominent god whose devotees he conquered. Thus he posed as a general deliverer of the people and as the servant of all the gods.

Moreover, he may have had in mind the fact that Egypt was a country of rich fertility, and that it would be of great convenience to have Jerusalem as a friendly way-station between his capital and Egypt, so that in case of war he would have friendly representatives at Jerusalem to spy upon the enemies and to render assistance to his forces. Possibly some of these, or possibly all of these, were the considerations by which the Lord stirred up the spirit or will of Cyrus to make the proclamation of liberty to the captives of Israel.

It was not an expulsion of the Israelites from the province of Babylon, for evidently as a people they were highly esteemed of their neighbors. The proclamation merely gave liberty to those who desired that they might return to Palestine, with the king's approval; and that those who remained might not feel that the king would be offended if they gave of their substance to help the enterprise, the proclamation made special mention of the fact that such co-operation would be pleasing to the king.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SIFTED

We may readily suppose that the majority of those who thought upon the Lord and who trusted in the promises made to the fathers, which centered in the Holy Land and the Holy City, were poor, for it seems that in every case poverty is more favorable to religious faithfulness and zeal than wealth; and yet that there were some both wealthy and zealous is abundantly testified to by the liberal contributions made by the captives themselves for the rebuilding of the Temple. The vast majority, however, were evidently well pleased with their foreign home, in which many of them had been living for fifty years, some for sixty-three years, and some for seventy years (those carried away captive at the same time as Daniel), while many of them were born in Babylonia. Many had intermarried with their neighbors, many were immersed in business projects, and many perhaps felt themselves too old for such an undertaking. Thus did the Lord sift them, that He might gather back to the Land of Promise such only as had a fervent zeal for the Lord and full trust in His promises.

The sifting of Israel began in the separation of the two tribes from the ten tribes, for the rapid spread of idolatry in the ten tribes gradually drew those faithful to Jehovah to the two-tribe kingdom, whose king was of the line which the Lord had promised to bless. Subsequently, when the two tribes also had grievously gone into idolatry, the Lord carried them all captive to Babylon, and now He stirred up Cyrus to make a proclamation for volunteers to return to the Land of Promise. The Lord, we may be sure, did not wish the return of any except those who had reverence for Him and faith in His promises. We may therefore conclude that the company which did return, numbering in all not quite fifty thousand, was composed of the very choicest of all Israel out of all the tribes, the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi being most prominently represented amongst these returning ones, as most of the faithful ones for several centuries had been found in their tribes. It should be noticed, however, in reading Ezra's account of the return from captivity, that the division of the nation of Israel was no longer recognized after the return--they are invariably spoken of as "all the people of Israel," and the sacrifices offered were for "the twelve tribes of Israel," and these statements are repeated over and over again. The ten tribes were no more "lost" than were the great body of those carried captive from Judah lost when they neglected to return under the proclamation of Cyrus.

The chief men of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites took the lead in the matter of accepting the provisions of King Cyrus' decree, and we read concerning the others that they were "those whose spirit God had raised to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem." In what way the Lord raised their spirit or disposition we are not informed. We may suppose, however, that those whose hearts burned with faith in the Divine promises to Israel and with zeal to be and do what would be acceptable in God's sight, would be awakened, quickened, by the decree of Cyrus, which was of God's instigation. Moreover, the Lord may have providentially directed other matters not here particularized, in channels favorable to the return of those who had confidence in Him and faith in His promises. The fact that many of these returning ones were of the poorer class is implied by the statement that many of their neighbors "strengthened their hands" with presents of money, goods, beasts and other valuables. Such offers would be a great encouragement and would probably be considered as the leadings of Divine providence in the direction of the return by such as were looking for providential leadings. Furthermore, the generosity of Cyrus was manifested in his sending back the precious vessels of the Temple, which must have been of immense value. The larger vessels are enumerated, in all 2499. These, with the smaller articles not specified, amounted in all to 5400, as stated in verse 11.

Sheshbazzar (otherwise called Zerubbabel, which means, "Born in Babylon"), who was of the royal family of David and Solomon, was appointed the governor of the colony, which was nevertheless subject to the Persian empire and its successors--the kingdom authority, removed from Zedekiah, never being restored to the present time--as was foretold by the Lord through the Prophet, saying, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it

shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him"--Messiah, at His Second Advent.--Ezek. 21:27; Luke 21:24.

THE RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY TO MYSTIC BABYLON

We have already seen that natural Israel's captivity in Babylon is Scripturally represented as a figure of the captivity of spiritual Israel in mystic Babylon; and that the deliverance by Cyrus was to some extent a representation of the deliverance of spiritual Israelites from mystic Babylon by Christ; that the fall of Babylon before Cyrus was figurative of the fall of "Babylon the Great," and that the *message*, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," applied not only to literal Babylon, but also now applies to mystic Babylon. In view of these things it is but proper that we should consider Israel's return from Babylon as to some extent representing the deliverance of the zealous of spiritual Israel from mystic Babylon--a work now in progress. "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."--Rev. 18:4.

But now, as then, comparatively few, even of the consecrated class, are willing to undertake the trials and difficulties incident to the leaving of the settled affairs, comfortable quarters, contracts, engagements, etc., entered into in Babylon. The only ones disposed to risk the hardships and to go forth into the desert, leaving the strong walls and protection of sectarianism, are those who have great confidence in God and great respect for the promises made to the Seed of Abraham. The call to return to the old paths, and to rebuild the Temple of the Lord, and to replace therein the vessels of gold and silver (the precious truths of the Divine Word--setting them in order as at first) is appreciated by the few only; yet these are encouraged by the Lord's providences, by the riches bestowed upon them from every quarter--not riches of an earthly kind, but of a spiritual sort--precious truths, valuable lessons and experiences, providential leadings, etc. These encourage such as are of faithful heart to go forward and by obedience to become heirs of those glorious things that God has promised to them that love Him.

As all the bitter experiences through which Israel passed were, under providential guidance, used to sift, separate, purge and purify the proper class to be ultimately brought back into the Land of Promise as the heirs of the kingdom, so the experiences through which the Lord's people have passed during the "Dark Ages" in captivity to Babylon, no less than through recent experiences, all tend to show us the necessity for separation from the world and its spirit, all lead us to appreciate more than ever the Divine arrangements by which the Lord is making ready for Himself and His service a peculiar people, zealous for the Kingdom, zealous for the Lord's Word, and zealous for all good works.--Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9.

It is not for those who rejoice in the Lord's promises and leadings to be sad, and to leave Babylonish conditions with regrets ("Remember Lot's wife!"), but they should be full of joy in the Lord and hope in His good promises; saying in the language of the Psalmist, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Those not thus stirred in spirit may as well stay in Babylon, as they would only prove snares and stumbling blocks to others.

BEREAN STUDIES IN THE REVELATION

STUDY CXXXIII--JULY 16.

THE ANGEL STANDING IN THE SUN-Rev. 19:17, 18

(716) What is the general picture in the vision we now consider, and how is it connected with the preceding one? H '20-373.

(717) At what point of time may we expect the fulfilment of the things here predicted, and what important events must first transpire? H '20-373.

(718) What is the Sun, in this vision, a symbol of, and what bearing has this on our interpretation of the Angel standing in the Sun? H '20-373, 374.

(719) Whom does the Angel represent? What is the reason for so applying this symbol? H '20-373, 374.

(720) What is implied in the proclamation of the Angel? What vision and proclamation of a previous chapter is closely associated with this one? H '20-374.

STUDY CXXXIV--JULY 23.

GATHERED TO THE GREAT SUPPER OF GOD--Rev. 19:17-21

(721) Who are represented by the "birds which fly in the midst of heaven"? To whom do the "Kings," "Captains," etc., refer? H '20-374.

(722) What relation do the events symbolized in this vision bear to the battle of Armageddon? H '20-374.

(723) What reasonable observations may be made in this connection with regard to Federated Protestantism and its part in this great struggle? Under what symbol does this system appear to be represented? H '120-374, 375.

(724) Explain the difference between the "Image of the Beast" and the "False Prophet." H '20-375.

(725) What seems to be implied in this vision with respect to Papacy and her future power and final downfall? In what condition will the destruction of Papacy leave the remaining systems? H '20-375. -

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION CONCERNING THE REVELATION EXPOSITIONS

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."--Rev. 1 :3.

AS is well known by the great majority of our readers, a series of articles on the Revelation has constituted an important feature of the HERALD since January, 1919. Only recently have these expositions been completed, covering more than three years of issues of this journal.

When we originally undertook to present some thoughts on the Revelation, it was not our purpose then to deal with the subject so exhaustively, but as the study progressed, a great deal came to our attention that to us seemed wise to embody in the expositions; so that it soon became evident that the entire matter was going to be greatly enlarged and would require much more time and space for treatment than was at first contemplated.

Our reasons originally for undertaking to deal with the subject were several. A number of brethren throughout the world had expressed the desire that there might be presented in the HERALD an assembling of all the published interpretations of BROTHER RUSSELL, as well as some of other expositors.

Again, amongst the introductory words of the Book of Revelation are some that are of peculiar significance: "Blesseth is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy. . . . for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1:3.) Thus a special blessing was pronounced upon those who read and hear. Surely none can fail to appreciate the fact that a book, the contents of which our blessed Lord Jesus esteemed of such great importance as to require that it be given in such a special, supernatural way, and containing such admonitory words of introduction, ought to be esteemed and prized highly. Thus said BROTHER RUSSELL: "There is a blessing upon those who read this Revelation, even though they do not understand, and a special blessing upon those who hear and understand the words of this prophecy and conform their lives to the things therein written."

Moreover, amongst the closing words of the Book of Revelation are some of solemn import, bearing upon this point: "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand." Thus the warning is given against any attempt to prevent an investigation and study of this book of symbols. We cannot but contrast the attitude of some of the older expositors, those living in the first half of the nineteenth century, who did what they could to unfold the visions of this wonderful book, with many of the professed ministers of the Word today. Many of the leaders of the Lord's people have, by their example and teaching, sought to discourage the reading or hearing of this book. Others have ridiculed those who have sought to heed its admonitions by reading and seeking to know the meaning of its messages.

St. John was not to seal up or to hide the wonderful visions that had been revealed to him, but he was to make them known, to publish them to the Churches. Not from any self-will or choice on his part, therefore, were these Apocalyptic visions put before the Lord's people, but by direct command of our God and Savior. We have the words of another, which are to the point in this connection:

"If He commanded the writing of them, I cannot see how men can excuse themselves from reading and studying them, or put them from them as of no practical worth, and yet retain their claim to holy faithfulness to the plain will and inculcations of our blessed Lord and judge."

In a lecture, discoursing on the words under consideration, over fifty years ago, this same man of God thus entreats his hearers: "Oh, my friends, let us beware how we neglect or despise a book upon which God Almighty has laid so much stress, urgency and importance. If John had sealed it up or failed to lay it before us as it is, he would have forfeited his place and standing as an Apostle of Christ. How, then, can we think our duty discharged, or the provisions of our highest blessedness duly accepted and used, if we pass it by as a dead letter or make it to us as if it had never been?"

A REVELATION FOR GOD'S SERVANTS

In fulfilment of the introductory words of the Revelation, there can be no doubt that a special blessing has gone to those who have heard and read the messages it contains. That this book of symbols was intended to be a blessing to God's people throughout this Age is most evident from the language: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass." The teaching plainly is that the Revelation messages are prophetic--"things which must shortly come to pass"--and are intended for the Church, the purpose being to convey a special blessing to those who receive them. The language from the pen of another is most fitting in this connection:

"The Book of Revelation is the one and only book of *New Testament* prophecy. As the completion of the whole prophetic Scriptures, it gathers up the threads of all former books and weaves them into one chain of many links, which binds history to the throne of God. As *New Testament* prophecy, it adds the heavenly to the earthly sphere, passes the bounds of time, and explores with familiar feet eternity itself."

The words of BROTHER RUSSELL again are of deep import in this connection:

"We note the simplicity of the introduction to this most wonderful book. The Apostle did not write the title as it appears in our Bibles: 'The Revelation of Saint John the Divine.' On the contrary, he claims no credit for the revelation; for it was not his. As he distinctly explains, it was from our Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him from God the Father. Nor was it to even St. John in a special sense; but, as he again declares, 'unto God's servants,' 'by His servant John.'"

Surely we could not hope for any stronger encouragement to examine and study the Revelation than that represented in the foregoing arguments. The facts show that as God's people have given heed to the admonition to read and hear, down through the Age, they have realized a corresponding blessing--strengthening of their faith and hope. As many of the visions of the Revelation describe faithful passing through scenes of great suffering and persecution, the knowledge represented in the visions was doubtless intended to supply a special need; for the Church always has needed the help and blessing that accompanies a knowledge of the more sure word of prophecy. We believe that it will be acknowledged by all Bible students that there is no portion of the

Bible that to so great an extent as the Revelation, reveals God's providential care and overruling of the events of history, both good and, evil, for the Church's development in grace and knowledge.

REVELATION GRADUALLY UNFOLDED IN HISTORY

While there has been a gradual, progressive understanding of its visions as history has unveiled them, it was not until these closing years of the Age that a clear understanding of its general scope could be given. The truth concerning the character of the Divine Plan for human salvation became so perverted and distorted by the false Church systems, that it could not be fully understood until the errors of the systems became separated from the truth and a clear understanding of the same was restored to the Church. This, we believe, has recently taken place and is now a matter of history; indeed, it is the subject of several of the closing visions of the Revelation. The fulfilment of these latter visions is of itself evidence that the days of the Presence of the Son of Man are here; and the words of the Savior are fully applicable: "And now, I tell you before it come, that, when it come, ye may believe." There can be no doubt that the faithful, who throughout the Age have studied the Revelation, have thereby been assisted to discern the Divine overruling in connection with the affairs of the Church. BROTHER RUSSELL thus, wrote:

"During the Christian Age, some of the saints sought to understand the Church's future by examining this symbolic book, and doubtless all who read and understood even a part of its teachings, were blessed, as promised. (Rev. 1:3.) The book kept opening up to such, and in the days of the Reformation, was an important aid to Luther in deciding that the Papacy, of which he was a conscientious minister, was indeed the Anti-Christ mentioned by the Apostle, the history of which we now see fills so large a part of the prophecy."

If it is reasonable to suppose that Luther derived important aid in deciding issues of great magnitude in his day, it is equally reasonable to suppose that other reformers derived equal benefit and help from the same source. Yea, verily, it is most evident that these wonderful prophecies were given for the purpose of counseling, assisting and protecting the Church through the long, dark centuries of her pilgrimage and of her witnessing to the Truth. As we read the writings of God's consecrated ones of the past, we learn that the Revelation visions have proved to be a mighty power in the Church's history, and that they have served to preserve the faith of the Church in times of peril and general apostasy. We have found that the knowledge of some of them, and the testimony thereto, have given birth to great reformation movements; that they have inspired confessors and supported martyrs to the cause of Christ, some of whom sealed their faithfulness at the stake, while others suffered dreadful deaths in other ways. It is also true that a knowledge of some of these marvelous, prophetic photographs, has been largely instrumental in breaking the chains of priestcraft, superstition and tyranny, and has brought multitudes out of bondage to the same.

REVELATION NOT INTERPRETED BY ONE MAN BUT BY MANY SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

Those who have studied the Book of Revelation to any considerable extent, and have read the writings of godly men who have written upon this book, must surely be convinced that the Lord has never given to any one of His servants the exclusive right to interpret the book; for the evidence shows that Divine blessing has been upon many writers.

We believe, therefore, that it is a great mistake, indeed, an egregious error, and one that has seriously interfered with the study of the Revelation, to suppose that God was to choose some one person to unfold its visions. Strange as it may seem to some, this erroneous idea has caused some of the Lord's people to refrain from reading and studying the book and making use of helps to its understanding, laboring under the impression that the Book of Revelation is not yet at all understood, and that in some mysterious way the Lord will yet raise up some one person to prepare a complete exposition of the entire book and give it to the Church. This view we feel cannot be

sustained by any language in the book of symbols, or elsewhere in the Scriptures. The facts show to the contrary; namely, God has used various servants throughout the Age to interpret the visions of Revelation as history has unveiled their meaning.

We believe it cannot be questioned, however, that the writings of PASTOR RUSSELL, especially his expositions of those visions of the Revelation that refer to the events that are now, and for sometime past have been transpiring, are by far the clearest and most nearly correct. However, this is almost wholly due to the fact of his having a clear conception of the Divine Plan of salvation--such a special knowledge being promised in the Divine Word to be imparted in these days; and apparently he has been a Divinely chosen vessel to make that Plan more clearly known. The evidences clearly establish the fact that BROTHER RUSSELL not only made a great study of the Revelation, but that he must have understood by far the greater portion of it; and while he did not write and publish a specific volume on the Revelation, nor leave any manuscripts whatever on it at his death, yet we have the evidence showing that he wrote and published much on the last book of the Bible and expressed himself as to his convictions, not doubtfully, but positively.*

*It is true that PASTOR RUSSELL had expected to write a volume on the Revelation, treating it in detail in systematic order. However, death came to him before he was permitted to realize his expectations in this regard, so that he not only did not write and publish such a book, but he did not even leave any manuscript bearing upon the Revelation that had not already been published in the six volumes of his *Studies* and in his semi-monthly journal.

THE DIVINE PLAN SEEN IN REVELATION

Again we say that to those who have been reading the HERALD compilations and expositions, it must be apparent that the Book of Revelation, the last of God's revelations to the Church, was not given for the last members of the Church only, but for the whole Church of Christ who have witnessed for Him throughout the Age. Of course, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose, because of the Divine purpose and arrangement that the visions would be understood as history unveiled their meaning, that the last members of the Church class would be privileged above others who lived before, to obtain a better understanding of all its visions because of their becoming matters of history, and also on account of the many superior, providential advantages whereby a correct knowledge of the Divine Word and Plan can be realized. Accordingly, it is noted that the Divine Plan of salvation as now clearly understood by the faithful watching class, is woven all through the symbolic Revelation visions, which may now be understood; and particularly is this found to be true concerning the closing visions describing the judgments now falling upon Christendom, and soon now to be completed in accomplishing its downfall.

It is also observed that the visions relating to the New Heavens and the New Earth, and to the New Jerusalem have now become very clear to the understanding of those privileged to discern the Divine Plan for the blessing of all mankind during the Millennium. How plain it ought to be to such privileged ones that the progressive unfolding of the Revelation visions and their gradual revealing, and the greatly increased light on the same, is according to a Divine arrangement! To the end that this might be seen in the HERALD expositions we have quoted profusely from the writings of expositors who have lived in the different generations of the Church's history, from St. John's day down to the present time.

In presenting what we have during the past few years in these columns, we have, therefore, not hesitated to avail ourselves of all the aid, all the help within our reach that would assist to an understanding of the Revelation visions; and in some instances we have quoted from expositors with whom we could not agree. We have recognized the fact that the Church that Christ established was one Body, and that Body embraced all the true people of God throughout the Age. The language of the Apostle Paul has been borne in mind respecting the distribution of gifts to different members of the one Body; and that each member is dependent for help upon the other members of the one Body. It is recognized, however, that no man or class of men since the Apostles' day have been infallible in their interpretations; indeed, that all have to a greater or less extent arrived at some erroneous conclusions, making it necessary for us to recognize that the Divine Word is and always will be the one and only test by which to prove all expositions.

PROVE ALL THINGS

Not only is this the test which we ourselves; apply, but it is also the test we have repeatedly urged all the brethren everywhere individually to apply to what has been presented in these columns as well as to other writings that purport to be expositions of the last book of the Bible. We have urged none to accept what we have presented without careful examination and comparison with the Scriptures. Each for himself should make the Truth his own.

That the brethren who have had to do with presenting the expositions in the HERALD have realized a blessing upon their own hearts, is putting the matter mildly indeed. The Lord has abundantly verified His promise to us, and granted a blessing in reading and hearing, etc. But we desire to acknowledge more than this. As we have been in touch with earnest students of the Scriptures in all parts of the world, their messages HERALD assure us that they too have been abundantly blessed and helped to a clearer and more satisfactory understanding of the Book of Revelation as a result of pursuing the study in the light of the HERALD expositions, and that in consequence, they have been relieved of much of their confusion and perplexity, and have been enabled to maintain a balance and poise of mind that has kept them free from the spirit of fanaticism and the fanciful interpretation that is so prevalent at this time.

Realizing, as all the faithful watchers must, that the remaining members of the Church in the flesh are undergoing severe trials and tests of faith, we regard it as most pleasing to our Heavenly Father to avail ourselves of all of His provisions in the way of truth and grace that are represented in His many messages. Consequently, we have not hesitated to earnestly commend to the brethren everywhere a careful and sober study of the Book of Revelation. Living as we are in a period when some of the events predicted in the Book are grandly fulfilling before our eyes on a most gigantic scale, events, too, of vast magnitude that mark the overthrow of Satan's empire and the ushering in of the long-promised reign of righteousness, the Kingdom of

God, surely it is appropriate for us to inquire and to be prepared to receive whatever our Master would be pleased to say unto us at this time, especially as He has promised to be with His faithful even unto the end and has admonished, saying: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy."

SHALL WE PUBLISH THE REVELATION ARTICLES IN BOOK FORM?

What we now desire to bring to the attention of the brethren throughout the world is this: As stated foregoing, many have written us of their deep interest in the study of the Revelation series; in a good number of places the study has been taken up by the Classes and is being pursued in an orderly manner in connection with the Berean questions which we have been publishing regularly in this journal. And now, from various parts of the world during the past two years, the request has come to our INSTITUTE to undertake the publication of the Revelation expositions in book form. There are several reasons offered in connection with these requests:

(1) Explanation is made that many of the friends do not have a complete file of all the back issue's of the HERALD containing the Revelation series. Several of the issues published in the year 1919, being out of stock, and out of print, cannot be had; hence the study of the series is seriously interrupted in many cases.

(2) It is urged with good reason that the expositions in the form of the HERALD are inconvenient for regular study, especially in Classes, and that if the articles were put in book-form it would be much more convenient and greatly enhance the value of a study.

(3) It is claimed that the expositions are of such importance and value that they should be in book-form, so that they could be put before the public and be given more general circulation; and thus a larger number of people might have the advantage of the truth these expositions contain.

Suggestions such as the above have come to us repeatedly, and in some instances money has been enclosed with the communication as an evidence of the deep desire, and as an encouragement to the brethren of the INSTITUTE to carry forward the project. These requests have not been ignored by us, nor treated with indifference by any means. Careful consideration has been given to the matter; in fact, it is because of these repeated requests that we have thus been led to bring the proposition before the friends at large.

All will concede at once that it would indeed be a large undertaking, and for this reason the brethren directing the affairs of the INSTITUTE do not wish to assume the responsibility of attempting such a project without consulting the wishes of the friends in general. More than this, the financial outlay required in such a publication would amount to a great deal, and as the surplus in our treasury is comparatively small we would of course have to depend upon the of the brethren who are interested in the proposition. Having given the subject some consideration, we have estimated that the matter contained in the Revelation articles would fill at least three volumes of ordinary size, such as "The Divine Plan of the Ages." Should the proposition be undertaken, there would of course be some revision of the articles, not with the object of specially changing the general interpretation, but with the thought of having some portions read more smoothly. This would mean, probably, some eliminations, as well as some additions, but the amount of matter as a whole would perhaps remain about the same.

WE SEEK THE WILL OF THE LORD ONLY

We think it scarcely necessary to say that this proposition is brought to the attention of the friends, not because we have any personal ambition or desire in connection with the publishing of a book or series of books; for we have not. If some personal ambition or desire were at the bottom of this matter, it no doubt would have been undertaken long ago, or at least been urged upon the friends. It is only after having been earnestly appealed to by the friends that we have at last yielded sufficiently to their suggestion to be willing to bring the matter more generally before the friends, so that they may give it thorough and careful consideration, and may indicate to us how they view the proposition and what their wishes would be in connection with the same. After all, it is the will of the Lord that we desire to ascertain, and it will please us just as well if He should indicate that it is. His will that we do not undertake the proposition, as it would should He indicate it to be His good pleasure for us to go forward with such a project; and we would know of no better way of ascertaining the mind or will of the Lord upon the subject than that of asking the friends everywhere to express their opinion and tell us what they think about it.

While we have just indicated that the matter would probably fill about three ordinary sized volumes, yet they would not all need to be published and sent forth at once. The work could be undertaken, one volume at a time, and pushed forward as the means was provided, and as the Lord should open the way. We would not be able to state what the cost of the books would be, but we believe that if they are prepared in something like the substantial form and appearance that we now have "THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES," the price would compare very well with that book.

Those who respond to this article (and we trust that we shall hear from all) should indicate to us what interest they have in the matter; to what extent they would hope to cooperate in purchasing the books, or in otherwise contributing to make the proposition possible; as the nature of the answers will determine what would seem to be the mind and leading of the Lord.

With these words we rest the matter, and ask the friends everywhere to give it careful consideration, and to join us in the prayer that the Lord by His spirit and grace may guide in our deliberations, that whatever is decided upon may be for the glory of His name and for the blessing and uplifting of His faithful people upon the earth,

BEREAN STUDIES IN THE REVELATION

STUDY CXXXV--JULY 30

THE LAST WAR AGAINST THE BEAST--Rev. 19:17-21

(726) By way of review, give briefly the significance and the history of the Beast, showing the connection between the visions of Daniel and the Revelator, referring to it. H '20-375, 376.

(727) What is the significance of the various symbols used in verses 18 and 19? H '20-376.

(728) What would seem to be the logical conclusion as to the manner in which the war, of verse 19, would be carried on--how will the Beast, the Kings and their Armies be gathered together to make war? H '20-376.

(729) What part will the "Lord's Great Army" have in this conflict? Joel 2:11; H '20-376, 377.

(730) Is the Lord responsible for the moral character of this Army? Are they actuated by the highest motives? And why are they called the *Lord's Army*? H '20-377.

STUDY CXXXVI--AUGUST 6

THE VISION OF THE BEAST'S DESTRUCTION--Rev. 19:17-21

(731) What Old Testament prophecy describes this great battle in similar language to that of this vision we are considering? Give a brief explanation, and show how the Lord's displeasure is manifested, and how punishment will be meted out to all who have part in this conflict. H '20-377.

(732) What relation has Rev. 16:19--the Great City being divided into three parts--to the conditions described in this vision? And what events seem necessary to transpire before these conditions obtain? H '20-377, 378.

(733) What further suggestions and lesson may be drawn from this picture wherein we observe St. John beholding this Beast, its burning and destruction; and what must have been his attitude as he witnessed these things ? H '20-378.

(734) What is represented by the Lake of Fire? Who are the "rest" or "remnant" of verse 21, and who are to be the victors in this coming conflict? H '20-378.

(735) What is the general teaching of this vision H '20-378.

AN IMPORTANT LETTER BEARING UPON THE CHRONOLOGY

[The following letter deals in a very comprehensive manner with one of the' most important features of our chronology--the seventy years of desolation as distinguished from the seventy years of servitude to the kingdom of Babylon. Though several lines of thought and arguments heretofore published are reviewed in this letter, yet it presents additional valuable information. We therefore earnestly commend it to the careful consideration of the brethren, believing that it will be found very profitable and instructive. EDITORIAL COMMITTEE.]

TO THE HERALD EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

IT seems that the chronology, especially that portion known as "the seventy years of Jeremiah," is receiving much consideration at this time among Bible Students. Was it not concerning matters connected with this very period that Daniel so earnestly sought for understanding, on account of which he was "greatly beloved"? Was he not one of those prophets who "inquired and searched diligently" into these things, "searching what, or what manner of time" was involved? (1 Pet. 1:10, 11.) Is it not evident that our interest today in this very matter is still more significant and important, since we desire to know if we have really approached to "the end of the days," when we can look up and lift up our heads, knowing that our deliverance draweth nigh?

In the November 1, 1921, issue of the HERALD you published a manuscript originally prepared by the undersigned in 1915. At that time, our particular interest was in seeing that sacred and secular chronology for the period in question could be harmonized in the light of facts and reason. Emphasis was laid upon the matter of the servitude to Babylon having begun earlier than the overthrow of Zedekiah, and we see no reason for doubting our conclusion that the seventy years of *servitude* began in the year 606 B.C., at the time when Nebuchadnezzar's army invaded Judea in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim. (Dan. 1:1; Jer. 35:11; 2 Kings 24:1.) A careful review of Jeremiah, 25th to 29th chapters, inclusive, should show that the period of servitude had certainly started prior to the end of Zedekiah's reign. We are well aware that some are having their troubles with Daniel 1:1. Daniel, however, is as safe in any critic's den as he once was in the den of lions. His testimony, like other portions of the Word of God which cannot be proved to be interpolations or mistranslations, standeth sure. There is no occasion for any bitter wrangling over this seventy-year period with its difference of 19 years in the chronology. We need only to contend for the simple truths as they are found in the Word, doing so in a humble attitude, in meekness and quietness of spirit, with no misgivings that the truth can ever be successfully assailed. If we have the truth on this point, and we believe we have, then everything is on our side, so that in due time it will all be seen in its beautiful consistency. In searching for the truth there is no necessity to strain a single point. We will simply seek in order that we may find or re-discover.

But now, the purpose of this writing is to refer more especially to the seventy years of desolation. While the subject is rife, I consider it my duty to state that I can no longer adhere to my previous understanding relative to the desolation period, as briefly set forth on page 331 of the HERALD mentioned. Rather, since giving this particular feature a fuller study in the light of the testimony of the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah, I have come to see it exactly as the HERALD had presented the matter, as the footnote on page 330, same issue, has it. I have gone into this desolation feature more thoroughly, and it is possible that a more exhaustive review of the matter may prove of interest and profit to the HERALD readers.

THE SEVENTY YEARS OF DESOLATION

We find that this period of desolation relates

(1) To the land--Jer. 7:34; 4:7; Zech. 7:14

(2) To the City of Jerusalem--Jer. 19:8; Dan. 9:2

(3) To the Sanctuary--Dan. 9:17; Hag. 1:4, 9

(See also Lev. 26:31, 32.)

It was our previous understanding that the seventy years of desolation were synchronous with the seventy years of servitude, beginning with the deportation of Daniel and others in the reign of Jehoiakim. That understanding was based largely upon the misapprehension that the Jews had observed to some extent at least the nineteen Jubilees that were due to fall prior to the period of the desolation, and upon the further misapprehension that the seventy years were in lieu *only of Jubilees*. It was thought that the 19 years from Daniel's deportation to the over-throw of Zedekiah were years of partial desolation and were in lieu of nineteen Jubilees partially kept. Now, however, after a more complete investigation of that particular phase of the matter, it appears that the Jews did not observe in any sense those nineteen Jubilees that were due prior to the desolation. Neither are we sure that they were in a position of freedom upon their land that would permit of their observing them at the proper time. It has also been ascertained that the *Sabbath*-keeping of the land during the period of the desolation had to do with Sabbaths in lieu of the regular seventh year Sabbaths, just as much as with respect to jubilee Sabbaths, *both* being referred to in that word, "Sabbath," and, furthermore, that the Sabbaths kept during the desolation in lieu of Sabbaths not kept could not include *future* Sabbaths; that is to say, *it could not be punishment meted out in advance*. Our thought concerning fifty-one jubilee Sabbaths of the future being kept during that desolation period *in advance* would not now seem to be a proper one, since Divine retribution must reach *backward*. The *hidden* feature concerning seventy *Jubilees* in connection with the seventy years of desolation does not have to do with the matter of *retribution*, that being a separate matter.

UNTIL THE LAND HAD "ENJOYED" HER SABBATHS

We find a Divine, interpretation injected into the historical account of 2 Chron., chapter 36, to explain that during the period of the desolation upon the land, which desolation had been foretold by Jeremiah, the land would keep Sabbath, and that in doing so it would be to fulfil seventy years. Jeremiah's prophecies do not make mention of the Sabbath-keeping feature, although they do repeatedly refer to the coming time of desolation. We must regard this reference to the seventy years of Sabbath-keeping as a specially Divinely inserted explanatory clause intended for our further enlightenment.

We would now direct attention to the thought that lies behind this word "enjoy"--"until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths." Only in this instance and in verses 34 and 43 of Lev. 26 is the Hebrew word. "ratsah" so translated, it being more of ten translated by the word "accept," as, for instance, in verses 41 and 43 of Lev. 26. The thought behind this word is that of "accepting as a substitute" (See Lev. 1 :4), and on this point we quote from the notes appended to the Cambridge Bible:

"The verb 'razah' has for its general meaning . . . 'to accept,' 'to be satisfied with,' and so 'to enjoy,' *the land being regarded as having been long deprived of its rights*, which are now restored, . . . [and] may perhaps mean 'cause [God] to accept' her Sabbaths, and so virtually 'pay back' those which had been disregarded and were due to God. The same verb is rendered accept in vs. 41, 43."

"Until the land had accepted [in substitution] Sabbaths that were due" seems to be the thought. This is further indicated by Lev. 26:32-35: "And I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And you will I scatter among the nations and I will draw out a sword after you; and your land shall be a desolation and your cities shall be a waste. *Then shall the land enjoy [accept] her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest and enjoy her Sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall have rest; even the rest which it had not--in your Sabbaths when ye dwelt upon it.*" (R.V.) Also in verse 43: "The land also shall be left of them and shall enjoy [accept] her Sabbaths while she lieth desolate without them; and they shall accept [same word as "enjoy"] of their iniquity because, even because they rejected My judgments and their soul abhorred My statutes."

THE BEGINNING OF THE DESOLATION

The desolation was a period of *enforced* Sabbaths. It was an interruption of the normal agricultural activities. Under normal conditions the land of Palestine was then a very fruitful land, "flowing with milk and honey." The Sabbaths would not necessarily disturb *volunteer* crops such as grapes and summer fruits. (Jer. 40:12.) The Scriptures show that the *method* of enforcing the Sabbaths during those seventy years changed according to the circumstances. The first phase of enforcement was by invasion of a foreign army; next, by the removal of the inhabitants from the land, and finally by drought and pestilence after they had returned to the land. We will consider the Scriptures which mark the beginning and the close of this period and then take up some other Scriptures which appear to require more special attention in considering the bounds of the desolation.

The invading army of Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city of Jerusalem on the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah. (2 Kings 25:2.) On that very day the word of the Lord came to the Prophet Ezekiel (24:1, 2), in the land of the Chaldees, calling particular attention to the importance of that day: "Son of man, write thee the name of the day, *even of this same day*, the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day." The importance of that day lies in the fact that it marks the beginning of the seventy years of desolation. That was during the winter season of Palestine, the seed-sowing season. It follows, therefore, that the agricultural year then beginning would be the first year of the enforced Sabbaths. It was at that time that many of the Jews fled from the land of Palestine and found refuge in neighboring countries. (Jer. 40:11, 12.)

There could be no normal agricultural activities with an invading army in the land. That siege continued until the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, when the city was broken up, a period of about eighteen months. That fall of Jerusalem was in July-August, 588 B.C. This date, 588 B.C., is the one which harmonizes every point connected with the consistent application of all the time prophecies that are involved, and is the date given by some of the most reliable authorities, including the following:

Vincent's "Dictionary of Dates"--under "Babylonia" and "Jews."

Winston's "Cumulative Encyclopedia"--under "Jews."

The Historians' History of the World, Vol.- II, page 127.

The Americana Encyclopedia--under, "Babylonian Exile."

Appleton's "New Practical Encyclopedia"--under "Jews."

Chamber's Encyclopedia--under "Jews."

Also the chronologers Usher, Blair and Hawes.

HOW THE DATE 588 B.C. IS ESTABLISHED

There are two methods of determining the year 588 B.C. as marking the time of Zedekiah's' overthrow.

(1) The twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity fell within the first year of Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon. (2 Kings 25:27.). This twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month was in reference to the months, of the Hebrew year, and marked the month of February. The Canon of Ptolemy, which established the year 536 B.C. as the first year of Cyrus, has also established January 11, 561 B.C., as the beginning of the reign of Evil-Merodach. Jehoiachin's captivity, therefore, dates from 37 years prior to the spring (Nisan) of 561 B.C., i.e., Nisan, 598 B.C. It is from this point also that Zedekiah's reign starts, since he was the successor of Jehoiachin. (Compare 2 Kings 25:1 with Ezek. 24:1; 1:2.) It was in the fifth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year that Jerusalem was destroyed. Consequently, in Nisan preceding that event, he had reigned only ten full years. Ten years from Nisan, 598 B.C. brings us to Nisan, 588 B.C., and in the fifth month after that (August, 588 B.C.), the city was laid in ruins.

(2) The second method of calculation is based upon Zech. 7:5, which marks the seventieth observance of a certain fast in the fourth year of Darius, king of Persia. That fourth year is well established by chronologers as 518 B.C. The cause of the fast was the destruction of the Jewish Temple in the fifth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year. "Shall we continue to weep and fast in the fifth month as we have done these so many years?" The time of the inquiry, in the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, is thus reached by the measurement of "*these* so many years." The number of the years is stated as seventy--not "those" seventy years, as, the Common Version has it, but "*these*" seventy years, as may be seen by reference to almost any other version, for instance, the Revised Version, the Margolis Translation, the Douay Version, Purver's Translation, Kent's Student's Old Testament, etc. The word "those" is translated from the same Hebrew word as "these" in Zech. 1:12 and 7:3. Some may contend that the word "those" would be just as proper a translation as "these" in all three instances, so far as the mere translation of words is concerned, but in view of the sense of the language of 7:3, the use of the word "those" in that verse, and "these" in the others, would not make the language intelligible, because, if it were "*those* so many years," the weeping had ceased already, and why, in such event, ask whether they should *continue*? That the *present* and *future* are involved in the question is shown by the ultimate answer given in 8:19. It is manifest that the same word must be used in both 7:3 and 7:5, as the latter is in reply to the former. "*These* seventy years" would reach to the very time of speaking. (See Luke 15:29.) We have determined the six years of the division of the land by a similar expression in Joshua 14:10.

The fast of the fifth month, as well as that of the seventh month (murder of Gedaliah--2 Kings 25:25), had already taken place in that fourth year of Darius. Both calamities had transpired just seventy years previously, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. That eleventh year is thus shown to have been seventy years prior to 518 B.C., viz. 588 B.C.

The siege of Jerusalem began on the tenth day of the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth year, and that would be in the early part of January, 589 B.C.--eighteen months prior to July, 588 B.C. We may safely conclude that the seventy years of desolation began in January, 589 B.C., and this would indicate, of course, that those years ended in January, 519 B.C., as we shall now proceed to prove.

WHERE THE DESOLATION ENDED

During the first two agricultural years of that seventy-year period, Sabbaths were enforced by an invading army. For 52 succeeding years, until the autumn of the year 536 B.C., the Jews had "leave of absence," an enforced vacation from the land of their fathers. We are not to understand that the "desolation" reduced the land to a *desert* (barren) waste, but rather that it was more like a fruitful and beautiful garden laid in ruins. It was *capable* of luxurious fertility. Its dormant powers were not aroused by the willing hands of a people long accustomed to sowing and reaping its fruitful fields and vineyards. Even then, in a land so productive, there would be considerable volunteer fruitage. The final instrument of enforcement in the "much diversified wisdom of God" was applied during the remaining 16 years of that seventy-year period, from the autumn of 536 B.C. until the agricultural year that began with the autumn of 520 B.C. That instrument was in the nature of a shortage of crops Divinely imposed. The account covering this matter is found in Hag. 1:2-11. The heavens withheld their rains and various pests and blights ate into the substance of the people. The soil was not yielding its normal fruitage and they were short of supplies.

SECONDARY CAUSES VERSUS THE FIRST CAUSE

It may be urged that the *cause* of that shortage of crops, after the return from Babylon, was solely on account of the fact that the returned Jews had ceased all efforts to rebuild the Temple. Verse 9 of Hag. 1 asks the question as to *why* their crops were not normal, and then we read: "Because of Mine house that is waste [desolate] and ye run every man unto his own house." That was indeed the *immediate* cause of their troubles, though it was not the *first cause*. We must draw a distinction between secondary causes and the Great First Cause. The God of heaven had declared through the mouth of His Prophet, Jeremiah, that there would be a period of seventy years of desolation (enforced Sabbaths). That period had not yet ended in 536 B.C., when the first contingent returned from Babylon. The immediate cause does not remove the First Cause. We may as well conclude that the sole cause for the beginning of the period of desolation was that the Jews would not submit to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar; for had they done so, it was promised that *they could remain in the land* (Jer. 27:11), and after the downfall of Jerusalem, the remnant left in the land were told to stay there and be blessed. (Jer. 42: 7-12.) Those were only immediate or secondary causes. The general first cause was that the Lord had foretold the seventy years of desolation and so it must be fulfilled. There must be seventy enforced Sabbaths in lieu of seventy Sabbaths not previously kept. Now we note that the resumption of work on the Temple in the second year of Darius, king of Persia, was inspired through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. (Ezra 4:24; 5:1, 2.) *Had God willed it so*, those messages might have come to them *earlier* and they would have resumed the work earlier. Undoubtedly God was at the helm and He *purposely refrained* from sending any message to them

until the due time. He then calls attention to the immediate situation without reference to the general overruling First Cause.

The foundation of the Temple was laid on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (Hag. 2:18) in the second year after their coming unto Jerusalem. They arrived during the seventh month of the Jewish calendar year, (October) and "in the second year *of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem* (marking a civil year in this instance since they arrived at the beginning of a civil year), in the second month (which would be the ninth month of the calendar year) began Zerubbabel the work in connection with the laying of the foundation. (Ezra 3:8-13.) The foundation was laid amid much rejoicing and shouting, but work was soon stopped by the inhabitants of the land (who were known in our Lord's day as Samaritans, they having occupied the country vacated by the ten tribes). For about fifteen years the work was in suspense, and so the period of enforced Sabbaths continued. God's Sanctuary was still desolate. (Hag. 1:4, 9.) On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius, king of Persia (the same as the Jewish ecclesiastical year), the work was begun in earnest. (Hag. 1:15.) It had progressed somewhat by the twenty-first day of the seventh month. (Hag. 2:1-3.) Then on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of that same year, which day was the anniversary of the laying of the Temple's foundation, this message from the Lord was delivered through the mouth of Haggai (2:10-19): "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment and with his skirt do touch bread or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands and that which they offer there is unclean, and now, I pray you [though they can perform nothing worthy, yet since they have resumed work on the Temple], consider [take note of this change in affairs], from this day and upward [forward], from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the Temple of the Lord [on this, day just 15 years ago], since those days were [counting from just *before* the laying of the foundation--that is, from October, 536 B.C., when they returned from Babylon], when one came to an heap of twenty measures there were but ten; when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you [during these past 16 years] with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands [the land continued to enjoy enforced Sabbaths]; yet ye turned not to Me, saith the Lord. Consider now [this change] from this day and forward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, *even from [this anniversary of] the day that the foundation of the Lord's Temple was laid*, consider it. Is the wheat yet in the bin? Yea, as yet the vine and the fig tree and the pomegranate and the olive tree hath not brought forth [thus Sabbath-keeping was still enforced, which Sabbath-keeping pertained to the *land* and not necessarily to manual toil]; *from this day* will I bless you." We must recognize, therefore, that with the agricultural year then begun there would be fruitful seasons, the desolation of the land having ended. The desolation of the Sanctuary was also at an end.

HOW THE END IS MARKED IN ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY

There is contained in Haggai's prophecy testimony of a sufficient character to warrant a reasonable belief that the period of desolation did not end until that second year of Darius, but we have some further evidence of a still more convincing strain furnished by the Prophet Zechariah. Exactly two months after the anniversary of the laying of the Temple's foundation, in that same second year of Darius, the Word of the Lord came unto Zechariah. We would direct attention to verses 7-13 of the first chapter of that book: "Upon the four and

twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, I saw by night and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, bay and white. Then said I, Oh, my Lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said to me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they stood among the myrtle trees and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth and behold *all the earth sitteth still and is at rest.*" The word "earth" is translated from the same Hebrew word as the word "land." There is a double application of this picture. Its immediate application is to the very year in which Zechariah saw the vision, namely, the agricultural year beginning with October, 520 B.C. At that time the "earth" referred to the land of Palestine only--"This *whole land* shall be a desolation and an astonishment." (Jer. 25:11; 4:27.) Its further application is to the end of the greater period of desolation that follows 70 A.D. In that eventful year, the second of Darius, 520 B.C., this vision of the troops of cavalry, which had been riding through the lengths and breadths of the land, was to mark exactly the end of the time when the land had "enjoyed" her Sabbaths. "The whole land sitteth still," that is to say, it is now *quieted*, it no longer cries out for vengeance. It is quieted and "is at rest"--it has enjoyed its Sabbaths of rest. Words could hardly be plainer to show us that *at that time*, the very year of that vision, the period of Sabbath rests had ended. Notice further the following language: "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, Oh, Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah [which had been desolated [see Jer. 9:11; 10:22] against which Thou hast had indignation [vengeance demanded by justice, expressed in enforced Sabbaths for those not voluntarily kept] *these threescore and ten years?* And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me *with good words and comfortable words.*" The expression "*these threescore and ten years*" would bring the period right up to that very year, the second of Darius. Such expression could not refer to a period that had ended in the remote past, say 16 years previously. To so regard such expression would be to do violence to the very meaning of words. It was not "*those threescore and ten years*, but "*these*" which were still running or were just closing. We found from Haggai's prophecy that the seventy years came to a sudden end at that time of the anniversary of the laying of the Temple's foundation, the ninth month, twenty-fourth day, second year of Darius just two months thereafter it would still be appropriate to speak of the time as "these seventy years" because it was still within the beginning of that first agricultural year, yea, still within the sowing season thereof, when the Lord's blessing would come upon their agricultural activities. "These threescore and ten years" ended with that season. There is no controversy about the second year of Darius commencing in the spring of 520 B.C., that year being as universally established as the year 536 B.C. The ninth month was in December, 526 B.C., and the eleventh month was February, 519 B.C. The siege of Jerusalem had begun in January 589 B.C., so that January, 519 B.C., would be exactly seventy years thereafter, and this is a midway point between the messages to Haggai and Zechariah marking the end of the seventy years. So we can think of the seventy years ending in that winter season, and thus exactly for seventy agricultural years the land had enjoyed enforced Sabbaths. What more definite language could we desire than this? This ought to be convincing, especially when we consider that it is in exact harmony with secular authorities concerning the dates marking this time.

The change in providential dealings from a period of "indignation" to a time when the Lord would now bless them in their agricultural pursuits is further shown by certain portions of the 8th chapter of Zechariah. We have referred to the seventy years mentioned in Zechariah 7:5, which form a more or less independent and corroborative link in the chain of evidence that establishes the chronological bridge from Zedekiah to Darius. Chapters 7 and 8 relate to messages that came to Zechariah during the fourth year of Darius (518 B.C.), the ninth month, and fourth day (but probably the four *and twentieth* day, the "twentieth" having been omitted by the copyist, since the twenty-fourth day was the anniversary day), just two years after the era of "blessing" had begun. Let us observe parts of the 8th chapter which show the changed situation. Verse 3: "I am returned to Zion." The Lord had returned two years previously. This statement is in the nature of a *confirmation* of the

Lord's previous assurance, something akin to His confirmation of the Abrahamic promises unto Isaac and Jacob. It was assurance made doubly sure. Verses 9-15: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, let your hands be strong, ye that hear *in these days* [which began two years ago], these words by the mouths of the Prophets [Haggai and Zechariah] [you] which were in the day that the foundation of the House of the Lord of hosts was laid [when there was much rejoicing and shouting, an occasion to be remembered) that the Temple might be [subsequently] built. For before *these days* [the days since 520 B.C.] there was [prior to this era] no hire for man nor any hire for beast [there was no employment on account of the drought and blight], neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction [referring to the opposition of the people of the land, who forwarded the affliction] for I set all men every one against his neighbor [it was a time of desperation and wretched selfishness, symbolic of world-wide conditions at the close of the greater desolation upon Palestine during the Gospel Age]. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days [the days prior to 520 B.C.], saith the Lord of hosts. For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase [it had not done so prior to 520 B.C.--Hag. 1:191, and the heavens shall give their dew, and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess these things . . . As I thought to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not; so again have I thought *in these days* to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah." The slate had been wiped clean. They had been given a new start. The seventy years of enforced, Sabbaths had ended with those days of blessing.

DESOLATE WITHOUT THEM

In view of the importance at this time of accurately marking the seventy-year desolation period, a few passages heretofore misunderstood should receive our attention in this connection. There are only a very few of such passages, however. Rather, there are more Scriptural references that are of such direct and positive application as to leave no room for doubt, to say nothing of the overwhelming and concurrent testimony of secular history which we cannot afford to absolutely ignore at this point, since Bible chronology stops with this period. In Lev. 26:34 we have the statement that "then the land shall enjoy her Sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate *and ye be in your enemies' land*; even then shall the land rest and enjoy her Sabbaths," with the similar statement of verse 43 that "the land also *shall be left of them* and shall enjoy her Sabbaths *while she lieth desolate without them*." There are still other Scriptures along this line which speak of the land being "desolate without an inhabitant." (Jer. 4:7; 26:9; 33:10; 44:22.) How shall we explain these Scriptures in connection with the thought that the seventy years of desolation continued on beyond 536 B.C. for the sixteen years that the Jews were in the land, until 520 B.C.? This is a pertinent question. If we had these Scriptures *alone* we might *naturally* conclude that the seventy years must apply to a period of seventy years of desolation during which *entire* period the Jews would be absent from the land, *although Jeremiah does not so state*. What is his statement? He applies the seventy years to seventy years of *servitude* (25:11, 12; 29:10), making mention of the desolation feature as an incidental matter. These *two* matters of servitude and desolation are separate and distinct, though relating approximately to the same period. The only Scriptures which positively teach that the desolation would be for seventy years are 2 Chron. 36:21 and Dan. 9:2. In view of the positive teaching of Haggai and Zechariah, which we have just reviewed, we can now get a sharper perspective than by looking at these other Scriptures alone. There can be no question that the land was to be desolate "without an inhabitant . . . desolate without them," and that it was so desolated. The vital question is as to whether or not *such* desolation would be for the *entire* seventy years, or whether He "who works all things after the counsel of His own will" could return them to their own land *prior* to the full end of that period of desolation without interrupting the period of Sabbath keeping. It appeals to us that God, with whom "all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26), could so arrange matters, could indeed so move from one phase of His operations to another, as not to alter His original purpose. God's steps are *progressive*. He changes in His methods of operation, but not in His original purpose. He decreed that there should be seventy years of enforced Sabbath-keeping, and so there were, but it include three distinct phases.

The Jews were in the land for about two years during the siege of Jerusalem, and for sixteen years after their return from Babylon, all of which comes within the seventy years of Sabbath-keeping. The large bulk of the people were absent from the land for 52 years, from 588 B.C. until 536 B.C., but remember that *a remnant was left in the land* at the time of Zedekiah's overthrow (Jer. 39:10), and there were Jews deported from the land *five years after that time* (in 583 B.C.), as shown by Jer. 52:30. We do not know just how many remained in the land after Jerusalem's downfall or for how long. A colony of Jews fled into Egypt some time after the murder of Gedaliah (Jer. 41:1, 16-18), but certain of them who escaped from Egyptian afflictions returned to Palestine, according to the Lord's promise that "none shall return but *such as shall escape*," (Jer. 44:14.) It was from this escaped number, or probably also from some who had never gone into Egypt, who obeyed the voice of Jeremiah that they should remain in Palestine, that the deportation in 583 B.C. was made, and we are not absolutely certain that even then the land was rid of the very last Jew. Where can we find, then, a period of full seventy years in which there was not a single Jew left in the land of Palestine? Our finite minds sometimes tend to a too extreme view of matters. The Lord's thoughts are not as man's thoughts. He is very resourceful and is able to fulfil His word in His own way. The reasonable conclusion we get from these statements, having in mind all other Scriptures hearing on the matter, is that the land would be desolated at a time when the great mass of the Jews would be absent therefrom, at which time it would be "without an inhabitant," and that *it would be in connection with this "desolation without them"* that the land would enjoy her Sabbaths. This would not preclude, however, a change of operation just prior to the close of the full period to permit of the return of the Jews to their land, since the land would continue to lie desolate and to keep Sabbath during the balance of the period while wreck and ruin remained on every hand and the condition of the people was desperate. They were no better off than they were in Babylon, perhaps not so well off. But a decided change took place with the close of the year 520 B.C.

Second Chronicles 36:17-21 was the particular text which influenced BROTHER RUSSELL to count the seventy years from Zedekiah to Cyrus (not ignoring that the results he obtained would naturally have a bearing). See Vol. II, pp. 51, 52. This text is in the nature of a resume covering the final scenes of the kingdom of Judah. Verse 15 mentions how the messengers of the Lord had been rising up continually and warning the people. As a result of not heeding these repeated warnings and of misusing the Prophets (v. 16), the anger of the Lord rose against His people and He brought King Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem on several occasions until finally the city and Sanctuary were completely destroyed. (Vs. 17-19.) "And they that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia; to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths, for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath to fulfil threescore and ten years." The two distinct features of servitude and Sabbath-keeping are also embraced in this passage. There were to be seventy years of servitude and seventy years of Sabbath-keeping, but the two are not synchronous. They do not begin together, neither do they end together. The servitude began with Nebuchadnezzar's reign, when he was made head over all earthly domains. (Dan. 2:1, 38.) Chapters 25 to 29 of Jeremiah show that the period of servitude began prior to the close of Zedekiah's reign. Let us now observe how the seventy years end in stages, first the servitude ending, and then the desolation.

UNTIL THE REIGN OF THE KINGDOM OF PERSIA

We read further that "in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah *might be accomplished*," Cyrus made a certain proclamation. (Vs. 22, 23.) The Word of the Lord was not altogether fulfilled in the proclamation alone, *neither in the return of the Jews to Palestine*. Both the proclamation and the return were steps in the progressive accomplishment of Jehovah's purpose. Seventy years

were to be "accomplished at Babylon." (Jer. 29:10.) Those seventy years terminated in 536 B.C. But there was to be another measurement of seventy years with respect to the matter of desolation and this measurement did not terminate in that year.

Another striking feature of this matter is that when the seventy years of desolation ended, in 520-519 B.C., only then the kingdom of Persia *Proper* was coming into power. Cyrus was not a prince of Persia Proper but of Elam, a province of Persia, as for instance, an aristocratic person born and raised in Canada could not be said to be of England Proper, but of a province belonging to England. The true Persian dynasty came into control with Darius, whose reign started in 521 B.C. The following quotation from *The Historians' History of the World*, Vol. 11, page 589, relative to Medo-Persian affairs, will afford a clearer understanding of this distinction:

"But before taking up the history of Persia, it is necessary to say something about the kingdom of Elam, for as we shall presently see, that was the land from which Cyrus came. Elam lay to the east and across a mountain range from Babylonia. . . .

"It must be clearly understood that Cyrus was not originally a king of Persia, but of the Elamite province of Anshan--a district that by his time included Shushan, the old Elamite capital as well. Three years after the conquest of Astyages, that is, in 546 B.C., he first calls himself king of Parsu (Persians), but not before. How he came to be lord of Persia we do not know, since this land was a totally different country from Elam, but it is extremely probable that his new title had some connection with the overthrow of the Scythian emperor. It is on the statement of Darius I that Cyrus has gone down in history as a Persian prince. Why this is so seems clear enough. Darius had to reconquer the disintegrated empire of Cyrus and Cambyses, and in doing so he wished to make himself appear the legitimate successor of his two great predecessors; therefore he makes Cyrus, like himself, a Persian prince, and we have seen how far this is true. *But from Cyrus to Darius, ought we not to speak of the Elamite empire?*"

Instead, we would suggest that we speak of it as the *Medo-Persian* empire, the combination and transition period when neither Media nor Persia Proper was dominant. Daniel had stated that the Kingdom of Babylon would pass to the *Medes and Persians*. (5:28.) This power was represented in the 8th chapter of Daniel by a ram, it being shown that the ram had two horns (Media and Persia), the greater of the horns (Persia) coming up last. Cyrus conquered the Median power prior to his conquest of Babylon. After his death in 529 B.C. and at the end of the reign of his successor, Cambyses, the empire fell into discord. Babylon was among the provinces that rebelled, so that it was necessary for Darius to reconquer Babylon. This he did just about the year 520 B.C., at the close of the period of desolation. It was at that time that "the reign of the kingdom of Persia" began in the secondary sense. It is noted that when Daniel had the vision of the two-horned ram he was at Shushan, the capital of the Elamite province, the home of Cyrus. Elam is referred to in the Scriptures a number of times. See Gen. 14:1; Isa. 22:6; Jer. 49:34-39; Ezek. 32:24; Dan. 8:2; Acts 2:9, and especially Isa. 21:2, where Elam is pictured as besieging (Babylon) along with Media, and again in Jer. 25:25 Elam is associated with Media.. Cyrus is mentioned in the Scriptures as the king of Persia (2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1, 8; 3:7; 4:3, 5) ; just as king (Ezra 1:7; 5:14, 17; 6:3) ; and as king of Babylon. (Ezra 5:13.) After his conquest of Media he took the title, according to history, of King of the Medes and Persians. He was a good representative of the combination feature as his ancestry takes in the royal families of both powers. The Americana Encyclopedia says, "But Cyrus soon drew together a formidable army of Persians and conquered his grandfather (550 B.C.), and thus became *king of Media and Persia*." The Medes were the sovereign power from about 700 B.C. to about 550 B.C.; then the Medo-Persia combination until 521 B.C., after which was Persia Proper. We will make yet another quotation on this point, this time from Young's Analytical Concordance:

"Neither was Cyrus a Persian, though he is thus described. Both he and his ancestors were kings of Anzan or Elam. The empire which he founded was not a Persian one; Darius, the son of Hystaspes, was the real founder of that. It is only as the predecessor of Darius, and for the sake of intelligibility to the readers of a later day, that Cyrus could be called a king of Persia, as he is in the Book of Ezra, where the *original words* of his proclamation 'King of Elam' *have been changed* into the more intelligible 'King of Persia.' (Ezra 1:2.) Elsewhere in the Bible (Isaiah 21), when the invasion of Babylonia is described, there is no mention of Persia, only of Elam and Media,--that is to say, of the ancestral dominions of Cyrus, and the kingdom of Ecbatana which he had annexed. This is in strict accordance with the revelations of the monuments, and is a most interesting testimony to the accuracy of the Old Testament records."

As Babylon was conquered by Cyrus, the head of the Medo-Persian combination, when the seventy years of servitude ended, so it was reconquered by Darius, the head of Persia Proper, when the seventy years of desolation came to a close. So we see that "until the reign of the kingdom of Persia" would have a double application; first, to the beginning of the reign of Cyrus *over Babylon*, 536 B.C., he having reigned previously over the Medes and Persians, and secondly, to the beginning of the reign of Darius over Babylon, 519 B.C., his reign over Persia Proper having begun two years earlier.

The foregoing embraces the principal considerations covering this matter of the desolation, and in view of the concurrent and preponderant testimony found on record, I am obliged to accept the view which is so clearly indicated, to wit: that which the HERALD had already presented as the correct explanation of the seventy years of desolation, only, however, with this slight exception, that the seventy years are shown to be solar years and not lunar years. Manifestly, since the desolation was a period of enforced Sabbaths, and each Sabbath was an agricultural year, and since an agricultural year is based upon the seasons and is, therefore, a solar year, it must follow that solar and not lunar years are involved. But we are in agreement as to the general principle of applying the period from the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth year until the second year of Darius. In all things we are endeavoring to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good."

Yours in the service of the truth that make us free indeed,

J. A. D.

THE TEMPLE REBUILT AND DEDICATED

--AUGUST 6--EZRA 3:1--6:22--

Golden Text.--"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah."--Psa. 84:2.

ABOUT four months must have been required for the return of the captives from Babylon to Palestine, for later Ezra, with a smaller company, required that length of time. (Ezra. 7:9.) Arriving at their destination about July or August, probably the first steps were to provide at least tempo rary homes amid the ruins of Jerusalem and the small towns in that vicinity. But as it was a religious motive which prompted their return--faith in God and

His promise--we find, as we might reasonably expect, that very speedily after their arrival the public worship of Jehovah was begun--probably about the beginning of their "new year," October.--Verse 6.

Evidently the Lord's hand was with them, and it was of His providential guidance that their first work, in connection with the restoration of the Temple and its Divinely appointed services, was the building of the altar. This will at once appeal to the intelligent Christian as an illustration of the truth so forcefully set forth in the Scriptures, that all approach to God, all reconciliation, all at-one-ment with Him, must be by and through the great sacrifice for sins which Israel's altar typically represented. Vain are all the approaches to God which recognize not as their basis the Sin-offering which God Himself provided--the "ransom for all."--1 Tim. 2:6.

The site of the Temple was Mount Moriah, and one of the most prominent spots on that mount is supposed to have been the site of the altar. This place selected for the altar, under Divine guidance, is believed to have been the same spot upon which Abraham offered his son, Isaac, the type of Christ, and received him again as from the dead in a figure, the Lord providing as His representative, upon the same spot, the ram caught in a neighboring thicket.--Gen. 22:3-13; Heb. 11:17-19.

It is supposed that this same spot was subsequently the threshing-floor of Araunah, where David offered the acceptable sacrifice to the Lord which stayed the plague. (2 Sam. 24:21- 25.) The Mosque of Omar now occupies the site of the ancient Temple built by Solomon; and the Mohammedans, who have great respect for the holy places, have left the site of the ancient altar exposed to view, protecting it with a railing. The visitor may there see today the very spot on which thousands of typical sin-offerings were sacrificed, the base of the various altars which were erected from time to time. It is of solid rock, and has a rather distinct groove or trench about it, which probably conducted the blood of the slain animals to what seems to be a natural drain or sewer by which the blood flowed in the direction of the Valley of Jehoshaphat--the valley of graves.

As we think of this historic rock, and think of the thousands of beasts slain there as types of the great ransom sacrifice, and note the natural passageway by which the blood was carried off, our thoughts revert to the Lamb of God, the great sacrifice for sins, and how the life which He laid down became a fountain or stream of life, not only for the dead of Israel, but all who died in Adam. The flow of blood toward the valley of graves seems to speak symbolically of life for the dead, secured through our dear Redeemer's sacrifice. But we remember that not only the bullock of the sin-offering was slain at this altar, but as well the goat of the sin-offering was slain there; not, only the blood of the typical bullock, but also the blood of the typical goat, then, must have passed through that natural channel or drain; and this reminds us of how the Church, as members of the Body of Christ, are during this Age, filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, sacrificing even unto death--for we know that, as the bullock represented the great High Priest, our Lord, so the goat represented the under-priests, the Church which is His Body. (Col. 1:24; Rom. 8:17.) And, as we have already seen, all the members of the Body of Christ, the Church, must finish their course and lay down their lives, before the great work of this Atonement Day, the Gospel Age, will be accomplished, and the healing and life-giving stream reaches the dead world with blessings and opportunities of eternal life.

ZEAL OF GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE

The beginning of the offering of sacrifices in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, at the beginning of their "new year" (in the seventh month of their civil year), was a time of special rejoicing with the Israelites--it was always the most joyous season, but on this occasion the return from Babylon and recent evidences of returning Divine favor added to its joys. And immediately the work of repairing the Temple was decided upon. They had brought certain gifts from the Israelites still remaining in Babylonia, and these were added to from the means of those who had returned, and the sum thus accumulated gives good evidence of the zeal of all concerned. As nearly as we may be able to judge, the total value of the gold and silver donated would amount to about \$400,000. (Ezra 2:68, 69.) It would appear that this sum was of three parts of about equal proportions, one-third contributed by those who remained in Babylonia, one-third by the few wealthy of the returned Israelites, and one-third contributed by the mass of the people, about \$3.00 each.--Neh. 7:71, 72.

We have never considered it proper to solicit money for the Lord's cause, after the common custom; and yet we are thoroughly convinced that there is a great blessing in giving, and that those who do not learn to give deprive themselves of a great spiritual grace, and endanger their spiritual prosperity, if not their spiritual life itself. But the giving, to be acceptable in the Lord's sight, must be voluntary--free-will offerings--"not of constraint." Accordingly, it is our judgment that money raised by the various begging devices in the name of our Lord is offensive, unacceptable to Him, and does not bring His blessing either upon the givers or the work accomplished. "The Lord loveth a cheerful [willing] giver." He seeketh such to worship Him as worship, and serve in spirit and in truth.--2 Cor. 9:7; John 4:23, 24.

Full of zeal for the Lord's cause, the people celebrated the corner-stone laying of the new Temple with great *eclat*. One of the special features of their worship was praise, and we think it safe to say that singing the Lord's praise has been amongst the greatest blessings and privileges of worship enjoyed by the largest number of the Lord's people throughout this Gospel Age also. The power to praise God in song has been conferred upon man only of all earthly creatures, and how appropriate that he should use this power to praise the King of kings!

ADVANTAGES OF THE HOUSE OF SONS

If those Israelites, the house of servants, returning from their bondage, and remembering the covenant promises of God to them, had cause for singing and shouting Jehovah's praise, much more have we, who belong to the house of sons, great cause to tell abroad the great things which the Lord hath done for us. We were all servants of sin once, under the bondage of sin, ignorance, superstition and death, but God, through the great Cyrus, has permitted us to go free. Appropriately, therefore, our first step should be to recognize the sacrifice of the altar, and then to offer praise to Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, for "He hath put a new song into our mouths, even the loving kindness of our God."

The Apostle assures us that, however appropriate, inspiring and refreshing are the songs of our lips, still more appropriate and still more appreciated of the Lord are our heart-songs, the joy and rejoicing of the new nature--"singing and making melody in our hearts unto the Lord." (Eph. 5:19.) And this joy and singing in the heart, this heart-thankfulness to the Giver of all good, necessarily finds expression, not only in Christian carols, but also in all the acts and words of life all of which constitute the hymn of praise and thanksgiving continually ascending before God from His people.

"My life flows on in endless song,
Above earth's lamentation;
I catch the sweet not far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear the music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul;
How can I keep from singing!"

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRAISE AND WORSHIP

We read, "They sang one to another in praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, For He is good, for His mercy endureth toward Israel." (R. V.) This is considered by some to be an indication of the Lord's will respecting Christian worship--that it should be done by choirs instead of by the congregation, and that it should be in the nature of solos and choruses. There can be no doubt whatever that selected and trained choirs can render better music than can the general average of Christians. Nor can we doubt that this would be particularly true of the time mentioned in our lesson, when, musical and other education was very deficient, and when the most that the majority of people could do was to "make a joyful *noise* unto the Lord." But two things in this connection should be kept in mind:

(1) That so far as the Christian Church is concerned, the Lord has left her entirely without restrictions in such matters--to praise the Lord with heart and voice, according to her love and zeal and judgment. It is not, therefore, for one to judge another respecting the use of his love, zeal, and judgment in offering the Lord worship in songs of praise, whether with instrumental accompaniment or without: it is for each individual and each church to exercise the liberty which the Lord has granted. However, we do urge that all remember that it is not the excellence of our music that will make it acceptable to our Lord, for we may well suppose that the harmonies of the heavenly choirs quite outmeasure the best efforts of earthly choirs, and hence could not hope that the Lord will receive our songs of praise because of their intrinsic merit. Their acceptance at all will be because they are expressions of the heart sentiments; and this being true, all who have heart sentiments of thankfulness and gratitude should be encouraged to make "a joyful noise unto the Lord," as acceptable and pleasing to Him through the merit of our Redeemer.

"Let all His children sing
Glad, songs of praise to God!
The children of the heavenly King
Should tell their joys abroad."

(2) It should be remembered that fleshly Israel was typical, and that their priests and Levites, selected for the offering of sacrifice and for the offering of praise, typified the Church, the "royal priesthood," and household of faith. We are to remember, too, that their songs of praise typified the songs and melodies of *our hearts*. From

this standpoint we see that the setting apart of a special choir of Levites for praise would not be in any sense of the word a sanction or command for the selection of trained choirs, separate and distinct from the congregation of the Lord's people: indeed, it would quite contradict the common practice of hiring unbelievers to do church singing. None can offer acceptable praise to God except those who are of the priestly tribe--"the household of faith."

Amongst those who were present at the laying of the foundation stone at the rebuilding of the Temple were some who probably as small children could dimly recollect the glorious Temple of Solomon, and who now, returning from seventy, years' captivity, were eighty or more years old. These wept as they contrasted the glorious things of the past with the small beginnings before them. Doubtless there was a great contrast, and yet quite probably distance and childhood's eyes lent an enchanted glory to their recollection of the former things. But their cries were drowned with the rejoicing of hope, and this was well. So with Christians who have gotten free from Babylon, and who are seeking by the Lord's grace to build their faith again on the old foundation laid by Christ and the Apostles at the beginning of this Age--they are apt to think backward to the blessings and privileges of the early Church, and to weep and sigh for those by-gone blessings. It is well that we should highly esteem the favors of God manifested in the primitive Church, its simplicity of worship and purity of faith and apostolic privileges, to the intent that these may stand before our minds as ideals in the work of reconstructing our faith and hope and love upon the old foundation; but it would be quite improper for us to give way to weeping at such moments; rather should the necessities and exigencies of our time lead us to energy; and the thought of Divine favor in our deliverance from Babylon should lead us to rejoice and to sing the new song which the Lord has put into our mouths, even His loving kindness.

SEPARATE YOURSELVES FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND

"The people of the land" were of mixed nationality, placed as colonists in that portion of the country of Palestine previously occupied by the ten tribes. This colonizing of mixed peoples was in pursuance of the general policy of the Assyrian and Chaldean empires, of removing captives from their native soil to new homes, thus breaking the ties of the fatherland, destroying patriotic feelings, that by these means the sympathies and interests of the people might be the more readily attracted to and united with the one central government at Babylon.

These "people of the land" (subsequently known as Samaritans) were disposed to be friendly to the returned Israelites, and proffered their aid in the building of the Temple, but their assistance was refused, the Israelites realizing that if these "strangers" were permitted to share in the work of constructing the Temple they could with propriety claim a share also in the character of the worship which would be established therein, and they foresaw that it would open the door to laxity in religious matters, and perhaps to the old idolatry, on account of which the Lord had so severely chastised them. Their course in this matter has been freely criticized as "narrow" and ungenerous, by those who have not rightly appreciated the situation. We are to remember that God's covenants were exclusively to the seed of Abraham, and not to other peoples, who were known as Gentiles.

As an illustration of this exclusiveness, and a proof of its propriety, we note the fact that our Lord did not preach to others than the seed of Abraham, saying to His disciples, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and

into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!" And of Himself He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."--Matt. 10:5; 15:24.

It would be well for those of spiritual Israel who are now returning from captivity in the various provinces, of "Babylon the Great" to remember this lesson. They find mixed peoples ready to express more or less of sympathy with them, and to offer more or less of cooperation in the re-establishment of the true worship of God in its primitive simplicity. The natural inclination would be to accept such proffered assistance, and to call every such assistant a "brother," and to accept and use not only the labor but the gold proffered, regardless of the fact that it comes not from true Israelites. Indeed, the general tendency of our time is not only to be willing to accept the money and other aid of worldly people in the Lord's service, but to beg for it, and to scheme to get it by every device conceivable--fairs, suppers, subscriptions, collections, etc., etc. The tendency in every case must be to bring in a foreign and unsanctified influence, and to do great injury to the true Israelites. This indeed may be said to be one of the chief troubles with nominal Protestantism today. Zion is full of "strange children," and their voice and influence predominate in the business affairs of the churches, in the doctrines, etc., etc. The true Israelites in comparison are but as a little flock of sheep amongst many goats and some wolves.

THE WORLD KNOWETH US NOT

When "the people of the land" found that their money and services were not acceptable, and that they could have neither part nor lot in the construction of the Lord's house, it offended them and made them enemies; and from that time onward they persistently opposed the work of the Israelites. So it will be with spiritual Israel; those who conscientiously live separate from the world in spiritual matters, and recognize as brethren in Christ only those who confess to circumcision of the heart and adoption into God's family, will find themselves opposed by moralists, liberalists and higher critics, as well as by the masses, who hate the light because it condemns their darkness--doctrinal and otherwise. Nevertheless, this is the only good and safe course to pursue. Better far is it that only true Israelites should be recognized as brethren, and thus the wheat be separated from the tares.

Some one has well said: "The Christian in the world is like a ship in the ocean. The ship is safe in the ocean so long as the ocean is not in the ship." One of the great difficulties with Christianity today is that it has admitted the strangers, the "people of the land," and recognized them as Christians. It does injury, not only to the Christians, by lowering their standards (for the *average* will be considered the standard), but it also injures the "strangers," by causing many of them to believe themselves thoroughly safe and needing no conversion, because they are outwardly respectable, and perhaps frequently attendants at public worship. It lowers the standard of doctrine also, because the minister who realizes that at least three-fourths of his congregation would be repelled by the presentation of strong meat of truth, withholds the same, and permits those who need the strong meat, and could appreciate and use it to advantage, to grow weak, to starve. Furthermore, the worldly spirit and the fuller treasury have attracted "strangers" into the professed ministry of the Gospel, many of whom know not the Lord, neither His Word, and who consequently are thoroughly unprepared to feed the true sheep, were they ever so well disposed.

The lesson in connection with the building of the Temple, the Lord's Church, "which temple ye are," is that worldly persons, worldly methods and worldly aid and wisdom are to be rejected. As all the living stones are to be polished, fitted and prepared under the eye and direction of the great Master builder, the Lord, so all the

servants, all the ministers of the Truth, engaging in this work, are to be, so far as we have to do with the matter, such only as manifest a circumcision of heart, and thus show themselves to be Israelites indeed. Much and serious has been the injury done to the Lord's cause by the selection of workmen whose chief recommendation has been that they had some ability as public speakers, a good address. Rather let us remember that none may engage in this work as true Israelites unless they be in full accord with the Master-builder, and by their ability in rightly dividing the Word of Truth show themselves to be workmen that need not to be ashamed.--1 Pet, 2:5, 9; 1 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 2:15.

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

PLEASED WITH THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST:

With the enclosed money order for items included on separate list I desire to add a few words expressive of my appreciation of your labors in publishing Volume I.

Its style and general appearance meets with our fullest approval, and we trust that none will find occasion for disappointment in this respect. The preface in particular appeals to us as being praiseworthy and admirably worded. Realizing that in the preparation of the book and the making of necessary changes, this would be one of the features of your responsibility that would not be undertaken without serious consideration, I am happy to assure you of my fullest approval. Without failing to honor BROTHER RUSSELL as the original publisher of the Volume, you have avoided that improper idolizing of him of which we have witnessed so much and we feel that the sentiments expressed would be just such as would meet with his own approval if he were permitted to express it at the present time, under prevailing circumstances. We say this because of his oft-repeated desire that all praise and worship be given to the Lord, from whom all blessings, including our knowledge of the Divine Plan of the Ages, come. May its publication not have been in vain. May it bring blessings still to those who hunger, and to those who scatter the Message therein contained.

June 15th HERALD containing the year's report, gave cause for gratitude to the Lord. It was even better than we had dared hope. We feel sure that all the dear brethren reelected to the various positions of responsibility, will resume the work with fresh encouragement. May the Lord richly bless you all and grant you all needed grace and wisdom. We love you, dear brethren.

Your brother by His grace,

J. J. B.--*Ont.*

IN THE WILDERNESS ALONE

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST:

I am rather new in the way, dear brethren-coming in the Truth in 1917; and I want to write and tell you how much I enjoy the HERALD, and how much it means to me in the way of Christian fellowship, am a young mother with small children; so with my home cares I seldom get to attend a meeting. But, Praise the Lord! by His grace, He provides all things needful for our spiritual growth, and so with my Bible and Scripture Studies, together with the HERALD for company, I have my little meetings all by myself, in the wilderness, so to speak! And looking back over the five years since I started out in the way, I know that I have made wonderful progress in the knowledge of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ our Savior, and that this knowledge has brought forth fruits of the spirit, which I am daily trying to perfect in my character. My constant prayer is that I may be found worthy to associate with our Lord and His brethren throughout eternity in whatever work it may please the Father to give us. O how I long for that glorious day, how earnestly I pray, "Thy Kingdom Come."

. . . I would like a few of the different free tracts if you have any, as I occasionally have opportunity to hand them out.

May God richly bless you in your labor of love, and help you to continue faithful unto the end.

Mrs. O. E. L.--*Texas.*

QUIET SHOWERS OF REFRESHMENT

DEAR BRETHREN:

Loving Greetings!

It has been my intention for some considerable time to write you--to thank my Heavenly Father for the rich spiritual food He has been supplying us with through the HERALD. Some of the recent articles have indeed been splendid, particularly (February 1st) "Acquaintance with God"--a grand exhortation which calls to mind the beauty of Madam Guyon's words:

"Could I be cast where Thou art not
That were indeed a dreadful lot;
But regions none remote I call,
Secure of finding God in all."

It is indeed most encouraging, in these days, when everything that can be shaken is being shaken, and when some pools from which we once derived blessings have become parched, to still look forward to a quiet shower of refreshment through the pages of your journal; and thus we desire that you may continue to be comforters and encouragers of the brethren.

It is with much interest that we here in Scotland learn from the last HERALD of the publication of Volume I, and while we understand the BIBLE STUDENTS COMMITTEE propose doing likewise here, yet it will be some time before they have the volume ready. Consequently I shall be glad if you will kindly send me a few copies to show the various brethren, and I am enclosing \$5.00 to cover cost of same.

Praying the Lord's richest blessing upon you, that you may be so guided by Him as to be a blessing to His people until the end, and again thanking you for your work and labor of love, I am,

Your brother in the glorious Hope,

C. M. M.--*Scot.*

THE LORD MY SHEPHERD

The Lord my Shepherd feeds me,
And I no want shall know;

He in green pasture's leads me,
By streams which gently flow.

He doth, when ill betides me,
Restore me from distress;
For His name's sake He guides me
In paths of righteousness:
His rod and staff shall cheer me
When passing death's dark vale;

My Lord will still be near me,
And I shall fear no ill.

My food He doth appoint me,
Prepared before my foes;

With oil He doth anoint me;

My cup of bliss o'erflows.

His goodness shall not leave me,

His mercy still shall guide,

Till God's house shall receive me,

Forever to abide.