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ARE WE APPROACHING THE MILLENNIUM?

[The following discourse, made up principally of Brother Russell's sermons, was delivered during the Springfield Convention by Radio from the large Westinghouse Station in that city. We publish it as a matter of interest from the standpoint that it is the first opportunity any of our brethren have had of delivering the Message after this manner.--Ed. Com.]

WE direct the attention to some words found in the last book of the Bible: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."--Rev. 21:4, 5.

Accustomed as we are to sights of wretchedness and woe, experiences of sorrow, pain, and death, the promise of our text seems to many a vain one, and those who believe it, trust it implicitly, are esteemed visionary, illogical, credulous. Some of the wise men of the world have told us that what has been and is, shall be, and that while we might hope for some prolongation of human life and some assuagement of human miseries, yet to expect that death and pain and sorrow will be abolished is absurd and indicates an illogical mind.

Other leaders there are, however, who we believe are more wise, have not accepted that reasoning. In fact, the literature of the world shows that intelligent men have refused to believe that the Divine purpose in the creation of our earth has yet been attained. Continually we find references to the Morning of the New Day, to the Golden Age, etc.

Not to the longings of men's hearts, however, but to the promises of our God do we look for real instruction on this subject. The Bible most emphatically declares that the entire period of human history thus far has been a night-time. The Prophet David explains, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psa. 30:5.) Thus, prophetically, we are assured that there will be a morning, whose glory, brightness and blessing will fully compensate for all the dark shadows of the night-time past.

THY KINGDOM COME

The promise of a new Age of blessing for humanity is in full accord with the prayer which our Lord taught us as His followers--"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." Surely none will dispute that God's will done in heaven means the perfect, happiness of all of His faithful. Surely none will doubt that there is no death in heaven, no cemeteries, no funerals. Surely none will doubt that there is no sickness there, no tears, or suffering of any kind. Surely none will doubt that there is no sorrow in heaven nor cause for any. Why, then,

should it seem to us incredible that the same Heavenly Father, who thus arranges for the sons on the spirit plane, should similarly arrange for His human sons? Why should we doubt that the love that has prevailed for the eternal happiness of the angelic hosts would be equally willing to provide for the eternal happiness of humanity? Why, then, should we hesitate for a moment to accept the explicit declaration of the Scriptures that a great change of dispensation is coming, when, instead of the world being subject to the prince of this world who now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2), it shall instead be under the domain, the rulership of the Prince of Glory, who redeemed Adam and his race from the curse of death by the sacrifice of Himself.

Instead of doubting the plain statement of our text, we should have been inclined to surmise it, even without a statement, had it not been that our minds had been poisoned by the great Adversary's substitution of darkness for light, misrepresenting the love of God and His glorious Plan of salvation, substituting therefore what the Apostle designates "doctrines of devils," devilish doctrines. It is by these false doctrines that the Adversary has, as the Apostle declares, blinded the minds of them that believe not, so that the glorious light of God's goodness does not shine into their hearts. (2 Cor. 4:4.) It is time that we should awaken from the horrible night-mare which has afflicted us during the night-time of the "dark ages." It is time that we should recognize the great Scriptural truth that God is love, that He created us with a glorious purpose in view, and that our affliction as a race through Adam's disobedience has not changed the Divine character nor the Divine sentiment toward us. It is time that we should learn afresh that our loving Creator changes not; that all of His glorious purposes shall be accomplished, and that the word that has gone forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereunto He sent it. It is time for us to learn that His permission of sin and sorrow, pain, and dying has been but temporary, with a view to our instruction as respects the exceeding sinfulness of sin and with a view to the ultimate blessing of all those who will be taught of God and ultimately learn the lessons He will give through His representative, our Redeemer, who shortly will be the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the world of mankind for their instruction and uplifting out of sin and death conditions back to perfection. How glorious it will be when He shall have accomplished His work, for as the Apostle declares, "He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet--the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:25, 26.) We may well long for His Second Coming in power and great glory, to bind Satan and to accomplish these glorious results. It should not be wonderful to us that the Apostle, who saw clearly and explained definitely respecting these things to be accomplished in the new dispensation held out that the glorious Messiah is the hope of the world.

"A DAY WITH THE LORD--A THOUSAND YEARS"

As we look back through the vista of six thousand years and hearken to the sounds of sorrow, the indication of pain, and note the reign of sin and death, our hearts are appalled. The period seems so long we are inclined to wonder whether or not the great Creator has forgotten His creatures in their sin, that He has as yet accomplished so little for their deliverance, that as yet His favor toward us is mainly that of promise and our confidence mainly that of hope. It is only when we understand the declaration of the Bible, "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years," that we can appreciate the fact that this period of the reign of sin and death is not nearly so long from the Divine standpoint as from ours. We may be certain Divine wisdom, justice, and love assure us that the period in which sin is permitted to have control of our race is none too long for the outworking of the glorious features of the Divine Plan. We can see that it has been crowded full of experiences to our race, that the birth and life and death of the twenty thousand millions of Adam's posterity is a gigantic work crowded into a comparatively brief space. And what will this six thousand years amount to anyway in comparison to the eternity of blessing which under God's provision may be the portion of those immense hosts! Furthermore, we

are to remember that no individual member of our race suffered for six thousand years, that the cup of sorrow, pain, and death as it has reached individual lips to be drained has been comparatively a small one.

On the contrary, the thousand years of Christ's Millennial reign, in which the earth shall blossom as a rose and the world of mankind be recovered from the tomb and the light of Divine favor scatter every shadow this experience for each member of the race will of itself quite outbalance the shorter period of their contact with sin and death conditions. Thus, if the Divine Plan had nothing for our race beyond the Millennium, there would be to each individual during the Millennium an abundant offset for his trials, pains, and sorrows of the present brief experiences. But the Millennium itself, the Scriptures show, is but the vestibule, but a schooling to prepare all who will accept it for an eternity of perfect bliss beyond, when there shall be no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying--when present things of sin and death shall have been utterly banished.

"THE GROANING CREATION WAITING"

Most beautifully does the Apostle picture the present condition of the world with its longing for something better which it does not clearly appreciate, but which we who are guided by the Word of God do understand. He says, "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together," and again he tells us that they are "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:22, 19.) The groaning, the travailing, the pain, the death, are literal enough, sure enough, manifest enough. The waiting part can only be appreciated by those who know what God has promised in our text and in various co-related Scriptures which give us assurance of the Millennial Kingdom and its glorious work of blessing for the world of mankind. God's revelation of His plans, His purposes, is only for His saints--"To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven," but to outsiders these things are spoken in parables and dark sayings. (Mark 4:1.1.) "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear [reverence] Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psa. 25:14.) When the Apostle declares that the groaning creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, he furnishes the key by which those in the proper attitude of heart to be taught of the Lord may enter into some of His secrets.

The difficulty with the majority who attempt to study the Bible is that they fail to get the proper standpoint of view; they think of the Bible as addressed to the world; they think of God as dealing with the world; whereas the Scriptures clearly teach that the time for Divine dealing with the world is not yet come; that in the interim God is merely dealing with special classes; as, for instance, in the past He dealt with the patriarchs and not with the world in general; from Sinai to Calvary He dealt with the Jewish nation only, but not with the world; and since Calvary to the Second Advent of our Lord and the completion of the Church He deals not with the world, but with the special class whom He calls out of the world--the household of faith from amongst whom He selects the "very elect" to be the Bride and joint-heir with their Redeemer and to be associated with Him in His Millennial Kingdom glory. The Apostle declares this to be the Mystery, the secret of the Divine Plan which obscures the same from the minds of men in general. Our Lord Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, of whom it had been written that He should bless all the families of the earth through His glorious Kingdom reign. But, instead of beginning that reign, that Kingdom, that blessing of the world, that scattering of darkness and binding of Satan as soon as He had secured the ransom price, He instead began another feature of the Divine Plan, namely, the selection of the Kingdom class and company of joint-heirs, a "Little Flock" to be the Bride of Christ, otherwise styled "members of His Body." This has been the work of the entire Gospel Age, anything else being merely incidental thereto, and as soon as this selection of the Church and the polishing and preparation of the individuals thereof is completed, the next work will be in order--the pouring out of a blessing through these upon humanity in general.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2.) The Lord's faithful, consecrated ones are His sons even now, though hampered with unfavorable surroundings and imperfect conditions. They are waiting for their "change," which shall be accomplished in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and which will constitute their resurrection from human to spirit conditions. Then in glory, the promise is that they shall "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13:43.) In this poetic expression the Lord pictures the glorious effulgence of Truth and grace which shall shine forth from Himself and His glorified Church, in that due time when the present Age shall have ended and a new Age, the Millennium, shall have begun. It is to those sons of God in glory that the Apostle points and assures us that the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together, waiting for their manifestation, their shining forth as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His beams.--Mal. 4:2.

THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS

This is the same epoch, this is the same glorious refreshment coming to the world at our Lord's Second Advent and the glorification of the Church which the Apostle Peter so graphically portrays, saying. "Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must retain until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."--Acts 3:19-21.

The restitution of mankind to the perfection lost through the fall is another way of expressing the same thing that is mentioned in our text, namely, that God will make all things new. When He created, them at the first they were very good, man being in his Creator's image and likeness. It was the fall and the resulting reign of sin and death that brought down our race from its noble condition, and what it needs is just what God proposes to do--make it new again, restore it again. And so our Master said that He came to seek and to recover that which was lost. (Luke 19:10.) Man was lost, his life-rights were lost, and these our Lord proposes to bring back to him, to put within his grasp and to assist him to put a value on them during the Millennial Kingdom.

Thus, says the Apostle, "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." No wonder the doctrine of Atonement is given so much prominence in the Bible and is set forth as the foundation of all hope, both for the Church in this Age, and humanity in the coming Age.

But even yet, notwithstanding the death of Christ the Creator does not propose to infract His law nor to permit a sinner to have eternal life. Hence, instead of granting eternal life to sinners, He has turned them over to their Redeemer to be instructed and assisted and chastened, uplifted and rewarded during the Millennial, Age--so many as will--to the intent that by the close of that Age all the willing and obedient shall have reached full perfection and be fully able thereafter to thoroughly obey every Divine requirement; because no longer sinners, no longer weak, no longer degraded or impaired, they shall be absolutely perfect through the uplifting influences of their Redeemer. All who will not avail themselves of this privilege will still abide under Divine wrath and be destroyed in the Second Death, from which there will be no recovery; but all the willing and obedient will be granted the gift of God--eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Every reference that the Scriptures make to that coming Age of the world's promised uplift and opportunity, pictures it as a time of marvelous blessings--blessings that will be for all the living and the dead, in the sense that our Lord Jesus said, referring to that time: "The hour cometh in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth." They will come forth from the tomb in order that they may receive the benefits of His atoning sacrifice and be given a trial for everlasting life.

ALL SHALL KNOW THE LORD

One of the most wonderful things the Bible tells us of respecting that New Day is the great intelligence and enlightenment which it will bring to every creature. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the face of the *great deep*." (*Isa. 11:9.*) "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." (*Jer. 31:34.*) Ultimately every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess, to the glory of God.

What an enthusing prospect the Bible holds out before the Church and so many of the world as can exercise a measure of faith to believe! The world indeed sees to some extent that great blessings are coming; but just what these are and how they are to come, mankind knows not; for, "the world by wisdom knows not God." The worldly wise have rejected the Bible, and do not trust it as a Revelation from God. Thus the wise are caught in their own craftiness. Their boasted wisdom ensnares them and blinds them to the Divine Revelation. Nevertheless some of our great thinkers, Mr. Edison and others, are rapidly seeing that the world is just on the verge of the most wonderful inventions and knowledge, which will transform the face of the earth and the people thereof. They are corroborating the Bible unwittingly; for they believe it not and know not of its messages.

But, now, let us take note of the fact that the dawning of the New Age is already here. Earnest students of the Scriptures are recognizing more and more clearly that the special blessings which humanity have been enjoying for the past fifty years, in the way of the vast increase of knowledge, modern inventions and conveniences, are but foregleams of the new dispensation. Some have been calling attention to the fact that we are closely approaching unto the Millennial Dawn; indeed, Bible chronology quite clearly teaches that six thousand years from creation have already ended--six great days of a thousand years each, mentioned by St. Peter: "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Thus the seventh great day, also a thousand years long, has commenced. We have been enjoying its dawning. It is to be a grand day; what wonder if the dawning be remarkable!

SIGNS OF THE APPROACHING MORNING

It may surprise some to be told that the past fifty years mean more to the world in the increase of education, increase of wealth, increase of all manner of labor-saving inventions and conveniences, increase of safe-guards and protection for human life, than did all the six thousand years which preceded them--many times over. The world has probably created a thousand times as much wealth during the past fifty years as during those entire six thousand years preceding. Yet these changes came so gradually that few have noticed them.

Fifty years ago man labored from sun to sun; today we are rapidly reaching an eight-hour day. Fifty years ago nearly all the labor of the world was done with sweat of face; today it is nearly all accomplished by machinery. Fifty years ago the sewing machine was just reaching perfection; today it is everywhere indispensable. So with the thousand household conveniences! So with nearly all of our sanitary and plumbing arrangements! So with the farm implements, reapers and binders, mowers, automobiles and gas engines, etc., etc., all belong to these fifty years. In our cities our modern conveniences are wonderful! Solomon in all his glory never dreamed of such things as the poorest human being in America may enjoy!

Prophecies respecting streams in the desert and the wilderness blossoming as the rose are having fulfilment--*not* miraculously, but in harmony with the Divine order of an increased intelligence amongst men. Artesian wells are being drilled, irrigating canals constructed, not only in the western part of the United States and Canada, but also in far-off Mesopotamia. The results are marvelous. Land previously not worth fencing is valued today at \$500 per acre. The increase of knowledge has been supplemented by governmental arrangements for the distribution of that knowledge amongst the people. The soils of various localities are being analyzed at public expense, and the tillers of the soil are given knowledge as respects what kind of fertilizers are required to bring satisfactory results. Under these conditions it does not surprise us to know that as many as 156 bushels of corn have been raised to a single acre, and that 600 bushels of potatoes and over is not an uncommon record.

Is not the Bible being fulfilled? Who can dispute these facts? What do they signify? We answer that they exactly corroborate the Divine declaration which describes our day: "Many shall run to and fro; knowledge shall be increased; the wise [of God's people] shall understand, and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation."--Dan. 12:4, 10, 1.

"THE MORNING COMETH AND A NIGHT ALSO"

We are in the Morning of the Age mentioned in our text. Ah, what a glorious Morning! How changed the human conditions from those of our grandfathers! How thankful the whole world should be. Paeans of praise should be rising from all people of the favored lands of civilization, and helping hands should be outstretched to carry the same blessings to heathen lands. But is it so? Are the people happy and rejoicing and appreciative of the New Day--the gift of Divine providence?

No! in proportion as the blessings of God have come, the discontent of humanity has increased; and unbelief, not only in respect to the Bible as the Divine Revelation, but in many instances in respect to the very existence of an intelligent Creator. Notwithstanding the great increase in the world's wealth, and the fact that there are some noble souls who are using their share of the wealth in a praiseworthy manner, nevertheless the general operation of the law of selfishness prevails; and all the legislation which has been enacted, or which can be enacted, fails to restrain the great giant institutions--corporations--of our day, fails to hinder them from the exploiting of the masses in the interests of comparatively few.

Did God know all these things? What will He do about them? Will He bring in the Millennial blessings, and risk that men shall take for granted that they have won the secrets of nature by their own wisdom and perseverance, and forget God entirely? Will they become more discontented? Would a Millennium of discontent be advantageous? What will God do about it?

According to the Bible, God foreknew the conditions of our day as we are now reviewing them; and in the text mentioned in Isaiah (Isa. 21:11, 12) He gives a key to the solution--elsewhere in the Scriptures made very plain. Through the Prophet God tells us of the dark night coming--after the Morning Dawn has well ushered in--a dark storm-cloud just at sunrise. This dark hour is described in Daniel's prophecy and also in Jesus' prophecy, to be "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation."

Students of prophecy recognize in the great distress of nations in recent years ominous signs pointing to the conclusion of this Age, at which time the Scriptures clearly show that Messiah, the great King, will take His great power and exercise it, with the result that the raging waves of the sea of human passion will all be quieted; the fires of anarchy will all be extinguished, and the Reign of Righteousness and Peace will begin.

Cannot we see the wisdom of the great Creator's Program--that He will allow mankind to convince themselves of their impotency, of their need of a God, and of the fact that there is a God and that His glorious purposes for humanity are revealed in His Word? Ah, no wonder the Bible speaks of that revelation of the Lord as "the still small voice of God," speaking to mankind through Messiah's Kingdom! No wonder the Lord declares that "then He will turn to the people a pure Message, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent!"--Zeph. 3:9.

We rejoice that such glorious things are coming even if it is necessary that the world reach them through the tribulation of the Time of Trouble. Happy are those whose eyes and ears of understanding are open now, and who are in such heart relationship with the Lord, that He can make known to them in advance something of the riches of His grace and loving kindness and tender mercies, and can show them how all the troubles that are coming are intended to work out blessings for the human family. Surely as we come to the knowledge of the Divine character and Plan, our perfect love for God casts out all fear; and we are able to rejoice in all of His prophecies and promises.

BEREAN STUDIES IN THE REVELATION

STUDY CXXXVII--AUGUST 13

MAKING READY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM--Rev. 20:1

(736) What do the Scriptures portray concerning the present evil world and the present order of things, as being necessary to take place before Christ's Kingdom can be established upon the earth and our Lord's prayer be fulfilled? How will the people of the earth in general be affected by such events? H '21-6.

(737) Are there any events in history from which we may draw lessons or form any conception as to the final troubles of this Age? If so, cite such events. H '21-6.

(738) What results have generally followed great social upheavals and disorganizations of governments in the past, and what relationship has Satan's dominion to the trend of human events? In what light do we view present human efforts to bolster up the present social order? H '21-6.

(739) What is the reasonable conclusion then with regard to Satan and his dominion as we look forward to the new order of things and the establishing of the Kingdom of God? H '21-6.

(740) Give a general review of the explanation presented in the Scriptures of Satan and his demon host, and the part they have played in human affairs. H '21-6.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE VISIONS OF REVELATION IX

SOME queries are before us bearing upon the visions recorded in the 9th chapter of the Book of Revelation, which have to do with the fifth and sixth "woe" Trumpets. It is claimed that the expositions in the HERALD treating this chapter appear to apply some portions symbolically and others literally, and we are asked if we can consistently do this; as, for instance, in referring to verse 4 of chapter 9, "it was said to them that they should not injure the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but the men who have not the seal of God on their foreheads."

Replying to the above, we are not surprised to find that the friends encounter more or less difficulty in adjusting every detail entirely satisfactory to their minds. We realize, as we review what has been presented, that in some instances the thought might have been expressed in clearer form. It is of course well known that we have never claimed special inspiration in connection with the preparation of the expositions we have published. What has been done merely represents an earnest endeavor on the part of the brethren to approximate the truth contained in the visions; at the same time conscious that time and events will be sure to make clearer some of the details that may still be more or less hazy in our minds. The Revelation promises a blessing to him that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and we believe that all who have humbly, and in the spirit of reverence, read and studied these visions have derived a blessing, even though they have not clearly understood all. The blessing is still for us, even though we may not grasp yet as fully as we should like every point.

Coming now to the subject matter of Revelation 9, it is observed that the sounding of the fifth and sixth Trumpets is here considered. It is recalled that in our published exposition* it was pointed out that the fifth, sixth and seventh Trumpets were properly designated "woe" Trumpets, in view of the proclamation that follows the sounding of the fourth Trumpet: "And I saw, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice 'Woe! Woe! Woe! to those who dwell on the earth, from the remaining blasts of the trumpet of those three angels who are about to sound.'" (Rev. 8:13.) This language appears to have no other meaning than that the three last Trumpets were to be in the nature of special retribution and to be of the character to bring severe trouble and distress upon certain bodies of people and institutions, the seventh, the final one, being intended to result in the destruction or overthrow of the whole present order of things and the ushering in of the new.

Our exposition endeavored to show that the events symbolized by the fifth and sixth Trumpets have to do more or less with those peoples living in the Eastern Roman Empire, and, of course, the fulfilment of the vision of the

eagle flying in mid-heaven, etc., is to be looked for as preceding the events symbolized in connection with the sounding of the last three Trumpets. We have seen in the expositions which preceded that which deals with the 9th chapter, that the events symbolized in the first four Trumpets bring us up to approximately the sixth century, and we found that the first four Trumpets had all either been fulfilled or begun their fulfilment by the time the sixth century had about one-third passed away. The third Trumpet symbol describes, we believe, the rise of the Papacy and its embittering or poisoning the waters of the truth; the fourth describes its darkening of the blessed hope of the Church by distorting and misapplying the prophecies concerning the same; and it is our thought that the facts of the events of the third and fourth Trumpets have continued on throughout the Gospel Age.

*See H '19-228.

SYMBOLS PORTRAY RISE OF A FALSE RELIGION

Our exposition dealing with the 9th chapter pointed out that the symbols used portrayed the rise of a false religion, and as the Papacy's rise had already been described in the symbols of the third and fourth Trumpets, this false religion is evidently an entirely new one. This is seen in that it originates from a star that appeared to St. John as though having fallen from heaven to earth--thus representing a false teacher. We applied this vision to Mohammed and the armies of the Saracens, believing that all the facts concerning them justified such an application, in that Mohammed and the conquests of the Saracens would be what is known as the great Saracenic Empire that existed for a period of nearly two centuries.

Coming to verse 4--"And it was said to them that they should not injure the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but the men who have not the seal of God on their foreheads:" While we remarked that there appeared to be a literal fulfilment of this command in the conduct of the Arabian hordes, yet it was not our thought that there was no further fulfilment. Our understanding is that the trees, grass, etc., were to be treated as symbols, the same as the locusts; and it was our thought that these were symbolical and would seem, as we have interpreted in Rev. 8:7, to represent peoples and their leaders.* In this vision, however, the facts, we believe, point to the religious peoples, as referred to by the grass, and the trees would represent the leaders of this class. Thus, as we have previously expressed the matter, the command not to destroy the grass, or any tree, etc., "is designed to set forth the *pretended* policy of the leaders of those armies. History records the fact that their conquests were made, professedly, not like those of ordinary warriors, as a desire for power, wealth, or gratification of passion, but rather for the extermination of false worships, especially idolatry. They carried on all their wars under the pretense of propagating the worship of the one true God." Thus history records that the avowed object of the Saracenic hosts was to exterminate what they considered all the corrupt and idolatrous forms of Christianity; and these alone they were familiar with, for idolatry prevailed in all the countries which were invaded and which succumbed before the onslaughts of these fanatical religious armies. The historian has recorded that in the first ten years of the conquests of the Eastern Roman Empire, 36,000 cities and capitals were captured and 4,000 churches were destroyed.

*See H '19-137,138.

SARACENIC HOSTS FULFILLED PICTURE OF LOCUST ARMY

Let it be clearly seen, therefore, that the command not to destroy the grass, trees, etc., but only those not having the seal of God, etc., does not mean that none of the Lord's truly consecrated ones suffered from those incursions, for of course they did share the distress and suffering with others; but the thought rather is that these leaders and their armies claimed or professed that it was not their intention to destroy those whom they judged to be in harmony with God and who, therefore, were not deserving of punishment.

Thus was fulfilled the conditions of this symbolical description. Mohammedanism actually "exterminated the idolatrous form of Christianity in Northern Africa. All except a feeble remnant of the Coptic Church in Egypt, and millions more of professed Christians have groaned under its cruel operation and destructive exactions. It extinguished altogether the idolatrous forms of the Gospel in the lands where true Christianity had its birth. The Saracenic power and the Turkish power (professing the same false religion) that succeeded it, have trodden down Jerusalem for long centuries. The Saracenic hosts everywhere gave men the choice of three things: the Koran (their religious creed), tribute, or the sword; and in those days usually the former was chosen."

In examining the picture of the locust army, we saw of course that these were intended to be a symbolical picture. The words, "the forms of the locusts were like horses prepared for war," seem designed to express similarity in their appearance; that is, St. John could think of nothing else in human affairs with which to compare them. In a general way, their crowns, their faces, their long hair, their teeth, their breastplates, the sound of their wings, were symbolic of their dispositions, and characteristic of their agency in their conquests, and pictured the traits of character by which the Saracens were most conspicuously marked, such as a pretention to right, cunningness, effeminateness, voracity, and insensibility to the miseries of those whom they warred against. The ravages of these Saracenic hosts as tortures covered, as has been observed, the territory of the Eastern Roman Empire principally.

We applied the picture in verse 7, "On their heads were as it were crowns of gold," as possibly having reference to the head-pieces, the turbans or mitres that were worn, which would give the effect of a crown. This application was made in that the turban was significant to these Saracen warriors of authority, power, as though it were a crown of gold. But outside of applying the picture of the crowns of gold to the head-pieces worn by the Saracens, we find the picture very well fulfilled in the fact that numerous crowns and kingdoms and dominions were conquered by them in their conquests.

THE FOUR ANGELS LOOSED

A further inquiry before us relates to verses 16 and 17 of chapter 9, under the sounding of the sixth Trumpet. The question is asked if it was our purpose in the exposition to apply this picture to merely literal horsemen and horses, and if so, would not this be a mixing of the literal with the symbolic? Is there not a larger view to be seen in this connection?

In replying to the above we again remark, as pointed out in the exposition treating this vision,* that it is our thought that the troubles or woes indicated in the events of the sixth Trumpet, like those of the fifth, have to do more especially with apostate Christian communities than with other of earth's peoples. In other words, it is the second judgment (the fifth Trumpet describing the first judgment upon what is called in later visions of Revelation, "Babylon"). This symbolical picture requires the release of four divisions or invading armies (vs.

14, 16), and as we have pointed out, these conditions, we believe, were met in the Mohammedan Tartar tribes of Asia, who ravished the Eastern Roman Empire from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, and one of the divisions (Ottoman Turks) has continued up to the present time, as is well known. These four divisions which were released, came from outside the Roman Empire, as the symbol requires, "bound at the great river Euphrates"--(that is, those countries or peoples outside the localities where the judgments were to fall). Then, in due time, when the command came, the hindrances were removed and the four angels or agencies were one after another permitted to go forth and inflict certain judgments. They constituted an innumerable host of warriors. Their manner of warfare was of the most dreadful and destructive character.

HORSEMEN PICTURED MILITARY POWER OF THE TURKS

It was not our thought, however, that the language of verses 16 and 17 is fulfilled, merely in the literal horsemen and horses there described; rather, it seems to us that in this vision we have a general picture of that particular phase of the Ottoman or Turkish Empire. While St. John called these strange appearing, weird creatures, horses and horsemen, it needs to be kept in mind in applying the symbols that they were not really so. St. John seems to give them this name because he could think of nothing in the natural world of which they so nearly reminded him. If they were real horses and horsemen, as we understand these terms, they could not symbolize literal horses and horsemen. This would conflict with the law of symbols. Designating them as such, however, enables us to discover the correct application of them to great cavalry armies. It seems to us, in thinking of the horses and horsemen of this vision, it would be a reasonable deduction to say that they represented the agencies and instrumentalities of the Ottoman power in executing its purposes and policies. Men and horses applied symbolically thus seem to represent, as we have said, the various forces, agencies, embodied in the military powers, the vast hordes and armies of the Turks.

While in our exposition treating this matter we spoke of the literal breastplates and armor of the Turks, we desired the thought to be more comprehensive and to include the symbolical also; namely, that their breastplates would stand for or represent that these armies, forces, etc., of the Turks were well armed, fortified, and thoroughly equipped to carry on their conquest, and these various pieces of their armor referred to, it seems are intended to give emphasis to this thought that they were on the offensive and presented a most formidable front as they marched forward in the execution of their deadly mission.

The horses having lion-like heads speaks to us of the appearances of these vast armies of cavalry men that they were lion-like in character, ferocious and terrible. Thus in the fulfilment of this picture, we are looking, not to the literal men and horses, except as symbols of the terrific and dreadful power and force, striking terror like a lion in their onslaughts. Consequently our thought is that the whole picture is highly symbolical; that these various symbols used in the 17th verse, the breastplates, the lion-like heads, fire, smoke, brimstone, etc., are all intended to be pictorial of the general character and appearance that these Turkish forces presented in carrying out their projects. That the armies were lion-like indeed in their fierceness and their boldness in dealing out terror and death to their enemies, seems to be symbolized by the latter part of verse 17, in the language, "Out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone."

With regard to the language of verse 19, "for their tails were like unto serpents," etc.: In keeping with the explanation presented foregoing, while there were literal men and horses involved in the fulfilment of the picture, yet we discover, as above stated, a symbolical character--that the Turkish powers as represented in

these hordes of cruel warriors, would be the fulfilment of the symbol. We think that no particular army of men was referred to, but that the warring forces in general and their characteristics are represented. The thought is, then, that as these allied warriors carried on their work of devastation and death, they prepared the way for other hordes to follow and implant their heathenish and ungodly religion. Thus the tails would seem to represent those whom the warring armies drew after them, or for whom they prepared the way. These hordes thus following the armies seem to fulfill the picture of the "tails of the horses"; and they left the sting of their false religion. Thus it was said that these Turkish warring powers hurt, not only by their conquests as warriors, but also by the spread of their false religion; for it was true that wherever they established their rule, there also they established their false religion.

It therefore seems to us, when we carefully analyze the whole situation in the light of history, and take a broad, general view of all the facts and circumstances, the Ottoman power and its military conquests seems to be a quite complete and satisfactory fulfilment of this portion of St. John's vision.

ESTHER SAVES HER PEOPLE

--AUGUST 13-ESTHER 4:10--5:3--

Golden Text.--"The righteous cried, and Jehovah heard, and delivered them out of all their troubles."--Psa. 34:17

WHILE the more faithful of the Jews had gone back to Palestine to repair its wastes and, as seen in our last lesson, were rebuilding the Temple, the Lord was not negligent of the remainder of the people who had not been sufficiently zealous to return to "the land of promise" under the decree of Cyrus granting them the privilege. Hundreds of thousands of Jews resided in all parts of the Persian empire, which then included Babylonia and Persia and nearly all Asia, including India. While special lessons and peculiar trials were given to those rebuilding the Temple, the Lord's favor was upon the remainder of the chosen people to the extent that He permitted to come upon them a great trial, severe testing, which undoubtedly taught them a valuable lesson in their far-off homes.

A record of this great testing is furnished us in the Book of Esther. The king of Persia at this time, about forty years after the completion of the Temple, was Ahasuerus, otherwise known as Xerxes, who chose for his queen the beautiful and accomplished Esther, a Jewess--apparently without particular thought or knowledge respecting her nationality, and without knowing that Mordecai, one of his faithful attendants, a keeper of the palace gate, was her uncle. The story of Esther is a most remarkable one, and confirms the proverb that "Truth is stranger than fiction."

Haman, one of the nobles of the land and a favorite with the king, became incensed against Mordecai because the latter would not show him as much respect as others of the people showed him. His pride excited his animosity to such an extent that he secured the king's decree against all Jews everywhere throughout the civilized world under the control of the Persian government. The edict was sweepingly broad, and directed the people in every quarter of the Persian empire to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish, all Jews both young and old, both little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. This commandment of the king was written out in various languages of the various peoples of the realm, signed with the king's seal and sent out by special messengers, a year being allowed to give ample time for the information

to reach even the most distant quarters of the realm; and as an incitement to the doing of the work thoroughly, those who killed the Jews were given the privilege of taking all their possessions. Haman felt that he now had accomplished a great revenge against the Jew who stood at the gate. Mordecai and all the Jews, on learning of the edict, were of course greatly troubled. They had but a year to live.

We may safely assume that such an experience as this would do more to draw the hearts of the Jews to the Lord in reverence and supplication than anything else that could have occurred to them. They fasted and prayed, in sackcloth and ashes.

Our lesson touches upon the matter at this point. The proclamation and edict had been in force for more than a month. Queen Esther had heard of her uncle's mourning in sackcloth, and its cause, and felt a special interest in him, as she had been an orphan and had been his special protege. Mordecai assured her that it was not only for him she should mourn, but that this edict included herself as well as all Jews, and that she should bestir herself to bring the matter before the king, and if possible, to have another edict issued which would counteract this in some measure. But there lay the difficulty: the laws of the Medes and Persians altered not, could not be changed, must stand as though they were unalterable. Nevertheless, something must be done, and the queen was the only one in position to make any approach to the king. For others to have done so would have cost their own lives.

NOTING OPPORTUNITIES AS DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Mordecai, evidently trusting in the Lord that the decree could never be accomplished, called the queen's attention to the fact that quite possibly she had come into her present position of honor and privilege for the very purpose of staying this evil against her people. His suggestion was that quite likely God's providence had brought her to that place to be the Divine agency for preserving the Jews from the evil malignity of their enemies in power. But he added that if she failed to respond to these opportunities, to manifest loyalty to the Lord's people, failed to risk something on their behalf, it would mean her own loss anyway shortly; and that he believed that God would provide some means for the deliverance of the people in general. It was her opportunity, it was her duty to act, and the responsibility he cast upon her.

There is a beautiful lesson of faith here that should appeal to all of the spiritual Israelites. Whatever we have, whatever positions we occupy of influence or power or wealth or confidence in the esteem of others, is so much of a stewardship granted to us by the Lord and respecting which we should expect to give an account; and if the account would be rendered with joy, we must be faithful even to the risking of our lives in the interests of the Lord's people, the Lord's cause. Let us lay this feature of Esther's experience to heart, that we may draw valuable lessons therefrom, helpful to us in the spiritual way. The suggestion that she had not come to a place of honor and privilege by accident, but that the Lord had overruled in the matter, is one that should appeal to all Israelites indeed. Whatever we have is of the Lord's providence; let us use it faithfully and as wisely as possible for Him and His; thus our own blessings and joys will be increased as well as our favor with the Lord.

The queen's answer was that Mordecai, as well as all the people, knew that if she or anyone else should attempt to go into the king's presence uninvited it would mean their death, unless the king chanced to feel favorable to them and extended his golden sceptre. She remarked, also, that evidently the king was not feeling very gracious

toward her, because he had not called her into his presence for more than a month. That her fears were not groundless is evident to those acquainted with the history of those times. For instance, it is recorded of this very king that when en route for a war he rested at Olaenae of Phrygia, where he was the guest of Pythias, who entertained him magnificently; but when the latter begged as a favor that of his five sons in the king's army the eldest might be left with him in his old age, the brutal Xerxes in a rage caused that son to be slain in the presence of his father, the body divided into two parts, the one part placed on one side of the road and the other on the other side, and the whole army marched between them. Of another Persian king it is related that to show his skill in archery he shot an arrow into the heart of his young cup-bearer, the son of his greatest favorite, Prexaspes. It is related of this same Xerxes that he allowed one of his previous queens to mutilate one of her rivals most horribly. "Her breasts, nose, lips, ears, were cut off and thrown to the dogs, her tongue was torn out by the roots, and thus disfigured she was sent back to her home."

SEEKING DIVINE GUIDANCE

Persuaded that no other course was open than to risk her life in approaching the king, Esther sent word to her uncle and through him to all the Jews of the palace city that they should fast with her for three days, and this, of course, implied prayer. We cannot suppose that they abstained absolutely from food and drink for three days, but that they went on short allowance, avoiding anything that would be specially pleasurable and all luxuries. This prayer and fasting convinces us that not all the Jews who had faith in the Lord had returned to Palestine, that some of this kind were still scattered throughout all Asia. No doubt the exceptional trial of this time thus proved a great blessing, and strengthening to the faith of Esther and her uncle and all the Jews.

At the close of the three days the queen, attired in her best royal robes to appear as attractive as possible, approached the king. Thus she used wisdom and sought to cooperate with her prayers for Divine guidance and blessing. The king was very gracious to her and extended the golden sceptre, which she touched, and then perceiving that only some urgent matter of request had thus brought her into his presence he inquired what he could do for her, assuring her that it should be done even to the extent of half of his kingdom--the latter expression, however, being doubtless a mere formality indicating great interest.

The queen's plans were evidently all well thought out, although at this time she was only about fifteen years of age. Doubtless the Lord granted the wisdom necessary for the occasion. She did not communicate her request, but rather led on the king's expectancy by inviting him first to come to a banquet which she had arranged in his honor, and to which also his most trusted officer, Haman, was invited. The appointment was kept, and at that banquet the queen again parried the inquiry as to her real desires by asking that the same two should honor her by attending a banquet on the day following also, and this was agreed to. Some of the Lord's dear people of the spiritual Israel are a little inclined to go to extremes and, trusting in the Lord, do nothing to forward the cause they wish to serve. We believe that Esther's course is a good example of propriety. We should both watch and pray, labor and wait, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. We should do all in our power while trusting to the Lord for the results, assured that He is able to make up all of our deficiencies, but at the same time leaving as little deficiency as possible.

Meantime the Lord worked upon the king from another standpoint, we know not how Divine providence has a thousand ways for its operation. The king passed a sleepless night, and seems to have inferred in some manner that he had been derelict to some obligation--that some one who had done him a favor had not been suitably

rewarded. He called for the reading of the court records as to various incidents, and amongst these he noted an occasion on which two of his trusted palace servants had conspired to take his life and had been frustrated by the exposure of their plot by Mordecai.

No doubt the king was guided to this matter in some way by the Lord's providence. He inquired what recompense had been made to Mordecai, what had been done for him, how he had been rewarded for this faithfulness to the king. Finding that no special reward had been given he called for Haman to offer suggestions.

The latter had been grieving over what he considered Mordecai's insult to him in not bowing to him, and feeling very confident of his influence with the king he had already erected a gallows in the court of his own house, purposing to have Mordecai hanged thereon by the king's decree before another day. He had come to the palace for the very purpose of requesting Mordecai's life when he was inquired for by the king, and asked to suggest what would be suitable honor to be done to a man whom the king desired to honor. Thinking that he was the person to be honored he suggested the king's horse, the king's robe, the king's crown, and one of the king's chief men to lead the horse throughout the city proclaiming in a loud voice that the king was thus honoring the one who rode. To his surprise the king directed him, to carry out this program with Mordecai as the honored man, and himself the king's representative leading the horse and proclaiming the king's favor. The king's word could not be disputed or even questioned, and the matter was carried out in every detail, but Haman, covered with shame and mortification, returned to his own house for consolation from his friends for his wounded pride.

In the afternoon the messenger arrived to escort him to the banquet with the king and the queen. Thither the unhappy man went, little surmising what more there was in store for him. In the midst of the banquet the king again pressed to the queen to know the important thing she had to request. Her time had come, and she besought the king for her own life and the life of her people, telling him that their enemies had inveighed against them for their utter destruction. The king, evidently failing to comprehend, asked who was *the* wicked person who had thus plotted to kill his queen and all her family connections, and she replied, This wicked Haman, who is with us at the banquet board. The king was perturbed in mind and walked from the banquet room into the garden to meditate what course he should pursue.

THE WICKED CAUGHT IN THEIR OWN TRAP

Meantime Haman perceived that everything was going wrong with him, that his life was in jeopardy, and that only the queen's word could spare his life; so when the king left the apartment, Haman made every appeal to the queen for her forgiveness and intercession on his behalf. In his frenzy of fear he forgot the circumstances and surroundings, and was partly stretched upon the couch upon which the queen was reclining at the banquet, when the king re-entered, and noting the situation his wrath knew no bounds. Ascertaining about the gallows, he commanded that Haman should be hanged at once upon the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Haman's estates were conferred upon the queen by the royal decree, and then the queen, explaining that Mordecai, who had once saved the king's life, was her uncle, requested the royal interposition to counteract the effects of the previous edict for the extermination of the Jews.

It was well understood that no decree or edict of the Medes and Persians could be altered, amended, withdrawn--once issued it must stand; but the king gave permission to Mordecai to arrange the matter with the

wise men of the palace, so that another decree should be issued which would be equally binding, and which would, in some measure, if not fully, offset the first decree. This was done by formulating a decree permitting the Jews throughout the entire realm to defend themselves, and to do to all their enemies all that their enemies were permitted by the first decree to do to them. This last decree was similarly sent by messengers, under the king's seal, to all parts of the empire, and as a result, when the fateful day came which was to have meant the extermination of all the Jews, the Jews privileged by the second decree to defend themselves were prepared, armed, and had favor with the magistrates of all the lands, because the second decree was understood to be a measurable offset to the first, and it was known that Mordecai, a Jew, was now the king's chief counsellor, or, as we would say today, Secretary of State. The result was the slaying of thousands throughout the realm, not chiefly the Jews but their opponents, their enemies, some eight hundred in the palace city being destroyed.

"DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU"

We are not to look back to this record of the slaying of enemies as an illustration of what spiritual Israelites are to do. We as Israelites indeed, begotten of the Holy Spirit, are to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us and spitefully use us and persecute us. We are to bless and injure not. We are to remember that at this time the Lord had not even revealed His own love. He had revealed His justice and His power but not His love, for the Scriptures declare, "Herein was manifested the love of God, in that He gave His only begotten Son," etc. (1 John 4:9)--it was never manifested before. It is this great love which God has manifested, and which He has inculcated upon those who appreciate His love and who have been benefited by it, that appeals to us. We love Him because He first loved us, and we love others because, having learned first to love the Lord, we have experienced an enlargement of heart and a broadening of sympathies. And this breadth of sympathy and love, which is a continual growth in the Christian in its relationship to the others, is proportionate to its exercise toward God. He that loveth God loveth also his brother and his neighbor.

The heart of this lesson is respecting Divine providence, Divine care over the Lord's people. True, God's providence has not been manifested in favor of the Jews for more than 1800 years, because they have been cast off for a time, rejected from the Lord's favor, their house left desolate because of their rejection of Messiah. We are glad, however, that the Lord through the Apostle has made clear to us that this blindness on their part and rejection of them are not to last forever--that in due time their blindness is to be turned away and the good promises of the Lord are still theirs and shall be fulfilled to them. The Apostle assures us that their casting off is merely until the fulness of the Gentiles shall have been brought in to Divine favor, until the full number of the elect Church to be selected from the Gentiles shall have been gathered. With the completion of the elect spiritual Israel, the Apostle assures us that Divine favor will again return to natural Israel, who are still beloved for the Father's sake--these now shall obtain mercy through your (the Church's) mercy--through the mercy of the glorified Christ.--Rom. 11:25-32.

When we note the Divine, providential care over God's typical people, it increases our faith and trust as His spiritual children, for with the Apostle we reason that, if God so loved us while we were yet sinners as to give His Son for us, much more does He love us now that we are no more sinners, aliens, strangers, foreigners, but consecrated to Him and seeking to walk in the footsteps of our Redeemer. Likewise, we reason that if God exercised His providential care in the interests of the typical people, He is both able and willing to do as much and more for His spiritual Israel--Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile--those who have entered into covenant relationship with Him and who are seeking to walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

"The Lord preserveth all them that love Him." True, He has a sympathetic love for the world which has led Him to provide a redemption for all in due time--all the redeemed ones will have a manifestation of Divine love and care over their interests--but now, during the Gospel Age, Divine blessings are conferred upon those who will constitute the Church, the Body of Christ, who love Him more than they love houses or lands, parents or children or self. All who can thus affirm to their own hearts their loyalty to the Lord, their faith and trust in Him, may be assured that all things are supervised for their good and working out for their welfare, in matters temporal and eternal of some who had declined to participate in the first return under Zerubbabel or were too young to go or to exercise their own volitions at that time. It was nearly seventy-five years after the return of the first company of about 50,000 under the decree of Cyrus that Ezra, a young man filled with religious zeal, became the leader of a company of the Jews still residing in Babylon, and went up with them to inspire and revive those who had first returned and their children and grandchildren meantime born in Palestine. Our lesson relates to the return of this second company.

THE KING'S ASSISTANCE

Xerxes, the Persian king who took Esther to be his queen, and who exalted Mordecai, her uncle, to be chief minister of state in the Persian empire, had been murdered by a palace conspiracy, and his son Artaxerxes was the reigning monarch at the time Ezra undertook the expedition in question. Three things were necessary for the success of the project: First, the king's promise or decree; second, money not only for the expenses of the expedition but also to properly forward the work at Jerusalem and encourage those who had become discouraged there; and third, the interest of the Jews required to be aroused so that a sufficient number of volunteers might be found. The king furnished the money and gave the necessary authority. This might seem remarkable did we not remember that in the Lord's providence his acquaintance at his father's court as a boy would more or less associate him with Mordecai and other Jews prominent in the empire and inspire him also with a respect for the God of the Jews.

Ezra belonged to the priestly family and evidently was very sincere, not only inspiring the king with confidence in the project but also enlisting the sympathy and cooperation of many of his fellow-countrymen to the number of about 1,700--probably including the families of some of them. These were volunteers--no one had a right to insist upon their going. Some may have gone with more or less of a spirit of adventure, but doubtless having knowledge of, conditions at Jerusalem the majority were thoroughly enthused with a religious ardor for God and for His law. Knowing what we do through the records of Ezra's thorough-going character, teaching, practices, we may be sure that no other class would be attracted to the standard raised by him in this expedition. An illustration of his spirit is furnished in verse 21 of chapter 8.

A certain point for the assembling of those who would return with him had been established at the river Ahava. The first condition enjoined on the assembly was a day of fasting, and we may be sure also a day of prayer to the Lord for His blessing upon the expedition--"That we might humble ourselves before our God and seek of Him a straight way for us and for our little ones and for all our substance." It was a great undertaking in those days to set out upon a journey of over eight hundred miles and one requiring slow travel, made necessary by the presence of women and children in the company and the absence of vehicles. The journey required about four months' time. True, there was a shorter road through the desert, but that would have been much more unfavorable in every way, and extra hazardous on account of the Bedouin tribes of the desert, who would have sought to take from them the treasures of gold and silver which they took along and which are estimated at

between two and three million dollars in our money, but really equivalent to much more than this when measured by the standard of the value of labor now as compared with then.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL'S TESTINGS

Seeking to apply this lesson to spiritual Israel, we see during this Gospel Age somewhat similar siftings and tests of the Lord's people. We find today that some of the children of the most devout reformers have lapsed into measurable indifference respecting the holy things of the Lord and His law, and are disposed, like the Israelites of the first return, to not only fellowship the world but to amalgamate with it in customs, in habits, in social functions. The spirit of separateness and consecration which enthused their forefathers is dying out, leading to a mixed or Churchianity condition not at all pleasing to the Lord, and one calling for reformation. On the other hand we have seen spiritual Israelites coming forward from Babylon with great zeal for the Lord and His cause, and if perhaps we wonder, we find a solution of the matter to be that some of these inherited a blessing from their parents, and we remember the word of the Lord that He would show mercy and favor to many generations of them that love and reverence Him.

Ezra seems to have been led to the announcement of the fast by a realization of his own weakness and of the dangers which would beset the Israelites on the journey. Relying upon the Lord's promises given to natural Israel, that they would be blessed in temporal things while obedient to the Divine precepts, he had almost boasted of this matter to the king Artaxerxes, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all them that seek Him for good, but His power and His wrath are against all them that forsake Him." It had been on the strength of this faith and this testimony that the royal decree had gone forth and the moneys had been subscribed, and Ezra felt that now to ask the king for a troop of soldiers for the protection of himself and his associates would have implied at least their doubt of the favor of God toward them or of His ability to protect them.

Realizing the perils of the situation and the danger from enemies, and that he was responsible in great measure for the lives of those who would be under his direction, and that under the circumstances he could not ask for soldiers, Ezra felt all the more the necessity for going before the Lord in prayer and with fasting, and hence the fast was enjoined upon all the people. We cannot doubt this did them good, tending to direct their hearts to the Lord as the great Captain of their salvation, awakening in them the thought that the whole expedition was based upon faith in the Lord and in His promises as respects the future and the present life.

"Like the Israelites after the defeat at Gibeah in their retributive war with Benjamin (Judges 20:26); like the penitent people at Mizpah, in the days of Samuel, when they put away their idols (1 Sam. 7:6) ; like Jehoshaphat and his subjects when rumors of a threatened invasion filled them with apprehension (2 Chron. 20:3), Ezra and his followers fasted and humbled themselves before God in view of their hazardous undertaking." It was the wisest preparation for their journey they could have made and is an example for us to follow when we embark on any new project. *"That we might humble ourselves before our God."* Humility is the only foundation for prevailing prayer. "Absolute, unceasing, universal humility must be the root-disposition of every prayer and every approach to God as well as of every dealing with man; and we might as well attempt to see without eyes, or live without breath, as believe or draw nigh to God, or dwell in His love without an all-pervading humility and lowliness of heart." "We should begin every new journey, every new undertaking, every new piece of work, by asking God to show us the way. The Bible very significantly begins with the words, 'In the beginning, God.' At the beginning of everything God should be recognized and honored. The

things we cannot ask God's blessing upon we would better not do. The place into which we cannot ask God to guide us we never should enter."

FASTINGS OF SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES

That there is an advantage in fasting and prayer to the spiritual Israelite is beyond question. Our case is not exactly that of the Israelites under Ezra, and yet there is some similarity. We are not guaranteed earthly blessings or earthly protection against earthly adversaries. As spiritual Israelites, however, we have a still higher guarantee, for in our estimation our spiritual interests as new creatures are higher and grander than all of our earthly interests, beyond comparison. We have the guarantee that, whatever shall befall us, the Lord is able and willing to overrule it for good if we trust in Him. It is in proportion as this gracious promise of the Lord fails to be appreciated by us that we look to the world for protection. The very experience of realizing danger and feeling timidity may prove indeed a superior blessing to us if it will but lead us nearer to the Lord--through fasting and prayer.

Fasting, as we have seen heretofore, signifies self-denial. The thought is not the weakening of the body by absolute abstention from food, but rather a disciplining of the body by abstaining from delicacies, relishes, etc. No doubt such fastings are profitable to us in other ways than one. They not only relieve the physical system of over pressure, but with many tend to clarify the mind and make it more acute, more spiritually inclined. We all recognize this as a fact whether we can explain the philosophy of it or not. To all believers, especially to all starting upon a course of consecration, of self-devotion to the Lord and to His cause, we commend fasting in reasonable and proper ways, the denying to one's self the gratification of natural passions, and in general the living moderately, abstemiously, using this world and its comforts and blessings as not abusing them--the using of them in so far and in such a manner as will be to the highest advantage as New Creatures in Christ. With the consecrated Christian this is not only the incident of a day but the course of a life. His every day is a fast day, a day of self-denial as respects any and everything sinful, and as respects any and everything that would not inure to the spiritual advantage of himself or others.

CONTINUOUS BAPTISM AND FASTING

Our fasting is like our baptism--it has a definite point of beginning and a definite point of ending. It begins with our baptism even unto death and it ends in death. These self-deniers, these fasters, are the self-sacrificers, the overcomers of the world, to whom the Lord has promised His special blessing of spiritual favors, peace, joy and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit in the present time, and by and by the everlasting blessedness of fellowship with Himself in all the joys and perfections and completeness of the Kingdom condition--glory, honor and immortality.

Ezra says, "So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was entreated of us." This verse could be applied in full measure to the spiritual Israelites who, under the lead of the great High Priest of our profession, are traveling to the New Jerusalem. Their fasting and prayers to the Lord for protection and help along the Narrow Way and for success to the journey's end are heard, and the Lord assures us in advance that all such petitions are granted. It is our Father's good pleasure to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask, and to make all things work together for their good, and to bring them under the leading of the great Chief Shepherd and

ultimately to the Kingdom. In other words, "He is faithful who has called us, who also will do it," (1Thess. 5:24)--He will do all He has promised to do, exceedingly more abundantly than we could have asked of Him or expected. The whole matter is with us: if our consecration is based upon faith in the redemptive work of our Lord, if it is a full and complete consecration, and if we live it out day by day, the results will be all and more than we ever expected.

"LET EVERYTHING BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER"

Our lesson shows that Ezra divided the wealth contributed by the Jews throughout Babylonia and Persia and by the king, amongst twelve prominent men of the Levitical tribe, strict count being kept of what each received and he being held responsible for the delivery of that amount to the properly constituted representatives of the Jews at Jerusalem. Thus our Lord, who is the Captain of our journey and who is bringing us to the Heavenly Kingdom, gives to every one of His followers pounds and talents for which they must ultimately give account.

In verse 28 Ezra said to these twelve men, "Ye are holy unto the Lord and the vessels are holy, and the gold and silver are a free-will offering unto God, the God of your fathers. Watch ye and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites and the princes of the fathers' houses of Israel at Jerusalem in the chambers of the house of the Lord." The chambers of the Temple were the little rooms of the court, separate from the Temple yet connected therewith. In these the officiating priests lived, and in them were stored the treasures belonging to the Temple and its service; they were, therefore, the safety deposit vaults of that time for the Lord's treasury.

We can see the responsibility that rested upon those men, yet still greater responsibility rests upon us who have received of the Lord's spiritual gifts and treasures, His great Truth. If it was required of those men handling earthly treasures that they should be faithful and watchful, diligent, much more may this be reasonably required of us--"A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify." All of these lessons should come, to us as fresh reminders of our responsibility, not for our discouragement, but reversely, to make us more watchful, more careful, more zealous, more appreciative of the riches of God's grace committed to us. Those of old time were to hide their treasure but we are commanded to show ours on every occasion--"Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father who is in heaven." The more we let our light shine, the brighter it will shine; the more we use and display the riches of God's grace entrusted to us, the more valuable will be our treasure and the safer we will be, for it is a treasure which our enemies will not really covet, and our faithfulness in acknowledging the Lord in all our ways will assure us of His protection and care.

AT THE JOURNEY'S END

Ezra and his company, after a four months journey, arrived safely at Jerusalem, the Lord having indeed kept them and delivered them from the marauding bands of enemies on the journey. Then it was that Ezra's real work began. He found matters at Jerusalem and throughout Judea in a much worse condition than he had anticipated, and he was used of the Lord in instituting a very radical national reformation which proved a great blessing to the people, though it sifted out some of their number.

Ezra magnified the Law, showing the people how the calamities that had befallen them as a nation were all foretold in the Law and were all the result of a failure to keep that Law; and the proper course now was not only to rebuild the Temple, as they had done, but to go back to the Law and seek to keep it inviolate to the best of their ability. He pointed to the fact that they had made unlawful unions with the tribes and nationalities surrounding them, and that the only course remaining was to separate themselves from all heathen people. This involved special trouble and trial in cases where Jews had married heathen wives, and Ezra's course would be roundly denounced by the entire civilized world today; but evidently he did the proper thing at the proper time in God's estimation, and was the Divine instrument in sharply separating between the Jews and other peoples. This spirit has persisted amongst the Jews ever since, and the effect has been what the Lord desired, the keeping of that nation and people comparatively separate and distinct from all others.

A lesson for spiritual Israelites may be found herein, though not according to the exact letter of Ezra's teaching. The spiritual Israelites are directed by the Captain of our Salvation, through the Apostle Paul as His mouthpiece, to be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers in marriage, and to have as little as possible to do with the world in general. Nevertheless, the spiritual Israelite is enjoined that if the unbelieving husband or wife remain and it be possible to live together in unity even under trying circumstances, they should do it; but if the unbelieving one depart, let him depart, consider it to be of the Lord's providence that the Israelite should be free from a vexatious alliance, though he would not be free to remarry.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

--AUGUST 27-NEHEMIAH 1:1-11--

Golden Text.--"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."--Jas. 5:16

NEHEMIAH was a young Jew of one of the prominent families of the Babylonian captivity. He occupied a confidential position with Artaxerxes, the Persian king, somewhat similar to the office held by Mordecai under King Xerxes (Ahasuerus), the father of Artaxerxes. His official title, "cupbearer," does not give the proper conception of the dignity of his position. In those days kings needed to be continually guarded against poisons, which could be easily mingled without detection with their liquid refreshments. Consequently the cupbearer was one whose loyalty was esteemed irreproachable, and his duties afforded him privileges and opportunities for intimate intercourse with the king more than others. They became confidants of royalty and court advisers, really occupying the position of Minister of State.

Though possessed of wealth and enjoying the king's favor, and in every way advantaged so far as this world's affairs were concerned, Nehemiah's heart was not surfeited with his earthly blessings and privileges, comforts and advantages. His brother had been amongst those who went up to Jerusalem with Ezra, as narrated in our last lesson. That expedition had been partially successful and partly a failure. Ezra had heroically drawn the line of demarcation between Jews and others. The walls of the city had been repaired in a fashion, but their enemies had been angered by what they no doubt considered the arrogance of the Jews in considering themselves separate and distinct from other peoples, refusing to intermarry with them. The sending back to their homes of all foreign wives under Ezra's direction capped the climax of what they considered to be injury done to them. These enemies had spitefully attacked the city, broken its walls and burned its gates, and the people of Jerusalem, comparatively few in number, weary and exhausted, had not the energy to rebuild and repair. Moreover, they feared to do so lest their enemies would deal harshly with them.

It was through his brother, who returned, that Nehemiah gained information respecting the deplorable condition of affairs at Jerusalem. The news made him heartsick, for he not only had the usual patriotism, but, as a Jew and as a believer in the Divine threatenings and promises, he had an intensity of love for the land of promise, a burning desire to lend his assistance in every manner for the recovery of the Lord's people and their re-establishment in power as the Lord had promised.

IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER

Our lesson relates chiefly to Nehemiah's prayer to the Lord after he had heard of the conditions in Judea--his prayer for the Lord's blessing and assistance, to the intent that the good promises of the Lord respecting His holy city and land might be fulfilled. Nehemiah does not give us the words of all his prayers, for we learn from other parts of the narrative that he prayed after this manner for four months before he began to have an answer. What we read, therefore, is supposed to be a general outline of the sentiments which he expressed in various forms at different times, praying without ceasing during those four months. Of course during all this time he attended to his duties, but this prayer was always in his heart, the sentiment of his mind, and more or less associated with all his thoughts and plans and arrangements.

So it should be with all of the Lord's people of spiritual Israel. The things which we have only a slight desire for we may mention once or twice at the throne of grace, but those things which lie very close to our hearts become our continual prayer, associated in our minds with all of life's duties and interests, the heart gravitating continually toward the thing we have desired of the Lord, and on suitable opportunities repeating to Him the request--making sure that the thing we request is in accord with His promises. This is the kind of praying which the Lord commended, saying, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint"--that the Lord's people ought to continue asking for the right things with some degree of persistency, and should not grow weary, hopeless, faithless, faint in their hearts.

ANSWERS LONG DELAYED

Doubtless there are many reasons why the Lord does not promptly grant such of our requests as are in accordance with His will, in harmony with His Word. We may not know all of these reasons, but some of them are apparent. Undoubtedly one reason for the Lord's delay in answering us often is to test the strength and depths of our desires for the good things that we request of Him. For instance, He informs us that He is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to us who ask than are earthly parents to give good things to their children; yet the giving of His Holy Spirit is a gradual process, and we are enabled to receive it only in proportion as we are emptied of the worldly or selfish spirit. It requires time to thus become emptied of self and prepared for the mind of Christ--in some it requires longer for this than in others, but all need emptying in order to receive the refilling. He that seeketh findeth, but the more he seeketh the more he findeth; to him that knocketh it shall be opened, but his continual knocking and his increasing interest in the knocking means his increasing desire to enter, so that as the door of privilege, of opportunity, swings slowly open before him his courage and strength increase as he seeks to avail himself of the opening, and thus every way the blessing is greater than if the Lord were to answer the petitions more hastily.

Whenever we think of prayer and answers thereto we should remember our Lord's words, "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye may ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7.) Ah, there are conditions in this statement. Those who abide in Christ must have gotten into Him by faith, repentance and consecration, and to abide in Him means that the faith will abide, the repentance for sin and opposition to it will abide, and the consecration to the Lord and His service will abide and be manifest.

The other condition also is a weighty one: "If My word abide in you." Ah, how evident it is that the Lord meant to associate Himself and His Word, the Scriptures, in the minds, in the hearts, in the lives, in the prayers of all who are truly His. We must search the Scriptures to know the will of the Lord, to know what He has promised and what He has not promised, to know what we may ask and what we may not ask for, and ascertaining these, the fully consecrated one will not want to be, to have, or to do anything except that which will be pleasing to the Lord in respect to him--"Thy will, not mine be done, O Lord," is his prayer. And when this position has been reached we can readily see that what ever would be asked by one thus well informed respecting the Divine promises and fully submissive to the Divine will, would be things which God would be well pleased to grant in answer to his requests.

We are to think of our Heavenly Father as rich and benevolent, kind and generous, yet wise as well as loving. We are to suppose that He will have pleasure in giving us the desires of our hearts if those desires are in harmony with His Plan, which Plan He has already framed on such lines as to include our very highest and best interests and the highest and best interests of all His creatures. So, then, "Faith can firmly trust Him, Come what may."

And His well-informed children can have all the desires of their hearts because their hearts are in full accord with the Lord, and they desire nothing of the Lord except the good things of His purpose and promise.

NEHEMIAH'S FASTING AND PRAYER

The substance of the prayers of Nehemiah is stated: "I beseech Thee, O Jehovah, God of heaven, the great and terrible God that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments." Thus praying, he had before his mind the testimonies of God's Word respecting His dealings with Moses and the Prophets and the kings of the past. He did not reproach the Lord as having failed with His part of the covenant, but, quite to the contrary, acknowledged that the Lord's ways and dealings with Israel had been just and true, and that the difficulties in which they were involved as a nation were the just penalties due them for their violations of the covenant made at Sinai. He expressed confidence also that the Lord would keep His covenant and have mercy upon the people, or upon those at least who would seek to walk in His paths.

He entreated, "Let thine ear now be attentive and thine eyes open that Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of Thy servant which I pray before Thee now day and night for the children of Israel, Thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, Thy servants, which we have sinned against Thee; both I and my father's house have sinned." No proper prayer can be offered to the great Creator that does not acknowledge in some manner the weaknesses, deficiency, imperfection, sin of those who approach the Throne of Grace. As the Apostle declares, even we who are New Creatures in Christ approach the Throne of Heavenly Grace to find mercy and grace to help in every time of need. But our boldness, our courage, is not that of self-confidence, but of

confidence in Him who loved us and who bought us with His precious blood in Him who died for our sins, and under whose covering robe we have peace, forgiveness, harmony with God.

O, how much this means to us! More than it could have meant to Nehemiah or others living before the great atonement sacrifice had been made. It is our privilege to see how God can be just and yet be the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. We see that by the grace of God, Jesus Christ has tasted death for every man, and that ultimately the merit of His sacrifice will be made applicable to every man through the Lord's own channels and agents.

Nehemiah was very open in his confession, and we believe that such an attitude is the proper one for all who would approach the Lord. Sins and weaknesses should be confessed to the Lord, however they may be reasonably screened from the eyes of others while we are seeking to do our best in walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit. He says, "We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandest Thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if you turn unto Me and keep My commandments and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there. Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand."

"BELOVED FOR THE FATHERS' SAKES"

This prayer, mentioning the Lord's threatenings and acknowledging the justice of them, and acknowledging also the transgressions and the infliction of the penalties, and this turning to the Lord's promises for forgiveness and mercy and reconciliation, exhibit the very proprieties of prayer which all should imitate--Jew or Gentile. The "Israelite indeed" who transgresses the Divine precepts and is chastened of the Lord can plead the Lord's promise to be very merciful to those who are of a contrite heart, and ask forgiveness based upon the great redemption sacrifice, and may by faith accept the Divine promise immediately and enter into rest of soul as soon as he shall have done all in his power to rectify the wrong bemoaned.

The Lord did respond to Nehemiah's prayer by granting him the opportunity of being associated in the rebuilding of the city and the placing of it upon a more satisfactory and permanent foundation, but it was not God's time for fulfilling all the gracious promises that He had made to that nation. It was not for Nehemiah to know the mysteries of the Divine Plan as they entwined, in all the affairs of the Jewish nation and held them together as a separate people for several hundred years, until Messiah was sent unto them to gather to Himself the Israelites indeed in whom there was no guile, and to reject, to blind, to give over to be scattered amongst the nations the

remainder of the Jewish people. Because it was not time to reveal the Divine Plan in all its details, therefore the Lord in hearing Nehemiah's prayer merely granted him the privileges and blessings and opportunities possible for Him at the time; leaving the larger fulfilments of that prayer and all the prayers for Israel to the glorious consummation when the glorified Christ, the antitype of Moses, shall stand forth to gather into one all nations under His own headship.

The Apostle Paul in his explanation tells of the still greater scattering of Israel amongst all nations of the world, accomplished at the beginning of this Gospel Age by the utter destruction of Jerusalem, from which it has not yet recovered. To the Apostle it was given to understand and appreciate the matter, and to explain to us who are of the spiritual Israel that He who scattered Israel was the Lord, who also would regather that people in His own due time. The Apostle points out to us most explicitly that all the history of this nation was known to the Lord, including, the scattering in fulfilment of our Lord's Word, "Your house is left unto you desolate." It was in view of this greater scattering that the Apostle, full of faith in the promises of the Lord's Word, speaking under inspiration, assures us that "the gifts and callings of God are not matters of repentance"--that God never gave nor promised things ill-advisedly, that He knew the end from the beginning and that ultimately every promise would be graciously fulfilled. He explains to us that the casting off of natural Israel was the appropriate thing during the period that God was gathering spiritual Israel to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife, joint-heirs with Christ. He assures us that as soon as the Church has all been selected, tested, proved, glorified, then Divine favor will return to natural Israel, and he says, "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy"--fleshly Israel shall obtain mercy through the glorified spiritual Israel.

THE RECONCILING OF THE WORLD

What a wonderful Plan! All for which Nehemiah prayed will be much more than fulfilled, not because the Heavenly Father has changed His Plan to suit the prayer, but because in His prayer Nehemiah asked in accordance with the Lord's Plan, yet did not ask as much as God has purposed to accomplish. The finite mind cannot grasp the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Divine provision. Consequently the Lord is about to do for natural Israel exceedingly and abundantly more than we or Nehemiah could have asked or could have thought. He is about to gather them out of every nation, people, kindred and tongue, and to re-establish their judges and law-givers as at first, only that these judges and law-givers of the future will be perfect, and, more than this, under the direct instruction and guidance of the then glorified Christ-Head and Body.

Doubtless it was because it would have been beyond the comprehension of the Jews that the Lord did not make very plain in all His prophecies that the blessings proposed for fleshly Israel were the same blessings which later would be bestowed upon all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues. As He veiled the fact that there would be a spiritual Israel as well as a natural Israel, so He veiled in the promises the fact that in the future all the nations, peoples and tongues will have an opportunity of becoming Israelites indeed, children of Abraham. These gracious promises are indeed clear when we attain a proper viewpoint in respect to the Divine Word, though hidden from any other standpoint. For instance, we now see the meaning of the Lord's words, "I have constituted thee a father of many nations" (Gen. 17:4); and again the promise, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen, 12:3); and again the Apostle's assurance that as the rejection of natural Israel meant the acceptance of spiritual Israel to the higher and chief elements of the promise, so the regathering of spiritual Israel would mean life from the dead to all humanity.--Rom. 11.

PRAYING TO THE POINT

Nehemiah's prayers were to a point, namely, that he might have a special blessing from the Lord upon himself and upon the mission which he believed the Lord would be willing to put into his hand through the authority and cooperation of the king Artaxerxes. His prayer was, "O Lord, I beseech Thee let now Thine ear be attentive to Thy servant and to the prayer of Thy servants [all true Israelites], who delight to fear Thy name: And prosper,

I pray Thee, Thy servant this day and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." As we have already seen, the monarchs of those days were absolute in authority, and their ill-will might very easily be aroused by any plans and arrangements or suggestions which might strike them as inimical to their own hopes, aims, ambitions and prospects; Nehemiah might well doubt that the king would take favorably to the suggestion that he be permitted to go to Jerusalem to endeavor to establish law and order there and to help along his own kindred. The king might very properly view this as disloyalty. If he were a loyal servant and appreciated his position in the king's confidence and his home in the capital city, why should he wish to leave these and go elsewhere to reestablish a nation and capital which had once been competitors in the race for world power. The king in his anger might order his execution, or cast a javelin at him.

Nehemiah's prayer to the Lord that He might grant him mercy in the sight of Artaxerxes shows that he had faith in the Divine power. We have often wondered if a deficiency of faith along such lines is not a part of much of the trouble of the Lord's truly consecrated people today--of spiritual Israel. We know that sometimes they have severe trials from those who hate them, from those who perhaps despise them and deal unjustly with them, and we wonder to what extent they remember, as Nehemiah did, that God has full power to open ways and means before us whereby we may engage in His service, if He be willing to accept of our services, if we find favor in His sight, if our prayers of lips and of heart go up before Him as a memorial, acceptable through Christ.

We must remember that a part of our lesson as the Lord's followers is that we must learn to walk in the footsteps of Jesus trustfully--by faith and not by sight; that we must learn patient endurance, and thus develop more and more all the fruits and graces of the spirit of love. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation will also provide a way of escape. He does indeed permit us to be tried as gold in the furnace, yet as gold is not permitted to be consumed in the furnace, so the Lord will not permit us to receive injury under any conditions so long as we are trusting in Him. All things must work together for good to them that love God, to the called ones according to His purpose.

As Nehemiah's prayer was delayed of an answer four months, and no door of opportunity seemed to offer for him to bring the matter to the king's attention, so with us--patient endurance and faith may be amongst the lessons which the Lord wishes us to learn by the delay in the answers to our petitions. Likewise, doubtless, that four months of delay was used by the Lord in more or less a preparation of the king for cooperating with the request of Nehemiah. And so with us it may be that, while we are praying, the Lord is not only preparing us for the blessing and opportunity and privilege we desire, but also preparing the circumstances and conditions which will bring us these opportunities and privileges in the best form. Let us then lay to heart and utilize the lessons of our Master's words, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."--Luke

"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," says our Golden Text. The prayers of the unrighteous, we understand, will avail nothing; and in this connection we are to remember that "there is none righteous, no, not one," and that all the righteousness which we have or which permits us to present ourselves before the Father, or which guarantees us that we shall be heard of Him, is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us--the merit of His sacrifice covers all our blemishes. Let us remember, too, that it is the fervent prayer that is the effectual one--the prayer that is earnest, from the heart and not merely from the lips. It is for this reason that self-denial, fasting and praying should be associated in the minds, and in fact we should be so earnest, so fervently desire the things that we request, and be so confident that they are the Lord's will, as guaranteed by the promises of His Word, that we would hold on and wait for the mercies the Lord thus prepares us to receive.

It would be rather unsafe, we think, for any of the "New Creation" to make request for temporal blessings. "After all those things do the Gentiles seek." (Matt. 6:32.) They seek those things because they know not of and appreciate not the higher and better, the spiritual things. Spiritual Israelites are exhorted by the Lord to appreciate the spiritual clothing, the spiritual food, the heavenly riches, which moth and rust cannot corrupt, and to seek for these.

The Master tells us what we may freely ask, what we may be assured that the Heavenly Father will be very willing to grant to us, though He bear long with us, though He give it gradually to us, and not perhaps as rapidly and as fully as we request it. His words are: "If ye, then, know how to give good gifts [earthly gifts] unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." (Luke 11:13.) The Holy Spirit is the spirit of love to God and to man. It cannot be given to us under present conditions except gradually, as the old selfish, wrong spirit is deposed from our hearts. This, therefore, must be continually our prayer to the end of life's journey, that we might be filled with the Spirit of the Lord; and thus praying means that we will be thus laboring day by day, and that the Lord will continually bless us, giving us the fruits of His Spirit in our hearts and in our lives more and more--its joys and peace and blessing.

Holy Spirit, banish sadness;
Pierce the clouds of weary night;

Come, thou source of joy and gladness,
Breathe thy life, and spread thy light.

Author of the New Creation,
Come with unction and with power;
Make our hearts Thy habitation;
On our souls Thy graces shower.

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THE TWO ADVENTS OF THE WORLD'S REDEEMER - PART I.

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that he might receive the adoption of sons."--Gal. 4:4, 5.

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

GOD'S Eternal Purpose of the Ages has had its Divinely appointed times and seasons. The two great important events are those of the First and Second Advents of our Lord and Savior. These two events were predetermined,

and nothing could possibly occur to change the definite time of each. In regard to the first we read: "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."--Gal. 4:4.

The First Advent of our Lord had its special work: He came to give Himself "a ransom for all;" He came to be "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." He did this by "tasting death for every man." We see then that the great central object of the First Advent was to ransom the human family from their hopeless condition, thus opening a way for all, if they would, to gain everlasting life.--1 Tim. 2:6; 1 John 2:2; Heb. 2:9; Rom. 5:18.

The Second Advent has also its special work and its appointed times and seasons. We have found that the principal features of the great work to be accomplished during Christ's Second Presence are comprehended in the two Scriptures: Acts 17:31 and Acts 3:20-21. The first reads, "He [God] hath appointed a day [time], in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man [Christ] whom He hath ordained;" the second, "And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

In unfolding these Scriptures we see, in brief, that the principal object of the Second Advent is to accomplish the resurrection of the dead--to give to the world of mankind an individual trial for everlasting life, and to restore to perfection all the willing and obedient of the children of Adam. This trial period is called "the times of restitution" and will cover a thousand years. This trial will be given under circumstances where full light will be granted, and under the gracious influences of a knowledge of God's love, as seen in Christ's ransom for all on the cross, and His gracious mediation at God's right hand. Those who under these influences, after a sufficient time of trial, fail to make progress towards that life will be cut off forever in the Second Death.

It has also been seen that the period between the failure of Adam in Eden and the First Advent had its Divinely appointed work, which was the gathering out of an elect class. (Heb. 11:39, 40.) Likewise has there been a special election going on in the period between the First and Second Advents. Both of these chosen classes--one earthly, the other heavenly--enter upon their respective destinies at the Second Advent, and in their glorified condition will be the Divinely appointed assistants in the trial and blessing of the world of mankind during the times of restitution. This is, in brief, the general outline features of the Divine Purpose and the objects to be accomplished by the two Advents of our Lord.

Clear and correct views of the Second Advent of our Lord can never be had until we come to see clearly the important object to be accomplished by it. If we hold to the prevailing error which teaches that all that is to be accomplished is the salvation and glorification of the elect, and the destruction, or as some hold, the assignment of all others to an endless state of conscious punishment, then an intelligent understanding of those Scriptures which refer to the Second Advent is impossible.

On the other hand, when we once see clearly the general outline features of God's Plan as stated above, the Second Advent of our Lord is not only big with hope and blessing to the Old and New Testament saints, but it becomes the great hope of the whole human family as well, and the Gospel is seen to be for the "blessing of all the families of the earth," as stated by God to Abraham (Gen. 18:18; Gal. 3:8), and "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people," as announced by the angel to the shepherds.--Luke 2:10.

THE SECOND ADVENT

"This Jesus who is taken up from you into the heavens, shall so come in the manner in which you saw Him go into the heavens."--Acts 1:11. (Diaglott.)

No fact concerning the mission and person of Christ is more plainly taught in the Scriptures, than that the same Jesus who was with the Father before the world was, who was made flesh, and who died upon the earth and afterward arose and ascended to heaven, is to be revealed again from heaven to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth.

Those who teach that our Lord comes at the death of believers, teach not only that which is unscriptural, but also that which is utterly impossible. Believers are dying every part of the day all over the earth, some times several at the same moment, and it would be out of the question for Him to be at the side of each one of these at the same time, even though moving with all the rapidity possible for a spirit body. And again, those who teach that He comes in the person of the Holy Spirit, have a very hazy comprehension of the person of Christ as a glorified being. God is present everywhere by His Spirit, but the Spirit of God and the person of Christ are in no sense whatever the same. God's omnipresence and Christ's Presence are two entirely distinct things.

Still again, those who claim that He comes in providential enactments, making these providential events His coming, are also far from the truth, and out of harmony with the Scriptures. While it is true that when He is present in person, certain definite events will occur, these events themselves, while a sign of His Presence, must never be confounded with the glorified personal Christ Himself.

Nothing can be plainer than the Scriptural teaching that just as really as was the human Christ present on earth during the Harvest period of the Jewish Age, just so really will the glorified and immortal and Divine Christ be present in the earth during the closing Harvest period of this Age, taking oversight of the work of separating the wheat from the tares, and personally superintending those agencies which are used for the utter removal of evil, preparatory to the work of restitution and trial of the whole world of mankind.

THE GLORIFIED CHRIST

"And, last of all, He was seen by me also, as if by the one prematurely born."--1 Cor. 15:8. (Diaglott.)

"And it occurred, as I was traveling and drawing near to Damascus, about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me; and I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?' . . . And as I could not see from the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus."--Acts 22:6, 7, 11. (Diaglott.)

There are several things, however, which are essential to an understanding of the *manner* of the Second Advent of our Lord--things which are not taken into consideration by many, even of those who most fully believe in its literality. The first, and perhaps the most important of these, is the great change that has taken place in the nature, person, and appearance of Christ since His resurrection.

Those who fail to note those Scriptures, that imply this remarkable change, will of necessity think of Him as coming in that form in which He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection. There are several Scriptures, which prove to the contrary of this thought. For example, we have it distinctly declared that when we (sons of God) shall look upon Him, it will be to see Him as He is and *not* as He *was*.

If any should say that the reference here is to our Lord before His death, and not to Him as He was manifested to the disciples after His resurrection, we need only refer such to the Apostle John's words from which we learn the fact stated above. St. John, who was one of those who beheld Him after His resurrection, during the forty days while on earth, did not expect that when he would be made like Him he would see Him as He was then. Note his words: "*It has not yet been seen what we shall be.*" (1 John 3:2, *Diaglott.*) St. John was fully aware that he and all other of the sons of God, when changed and glorified, are to have heavenly bodies like the Lord. If he had believed that these bodies were to be like the body Jesus appeared in as seen by him and others, during the forty days after His resurrection, then the Apostle would never have made such a statement. Instead of this, he distinctly declares that we know *not* (now) what we shall be, and that it will be only when He shall appear, that we shall be made like Him, and see Him *as He* is. Hear his words: "We know, however, that if He should appear [be manifested] we shall be like Him, because [then only] we shall see Him as He is"--not as He was.--1 John 3:2.

It was essential that St. Paul, to become an Apostle, should receive his apostolic commission from the Lord in person. We learn that for one single instant St. Paul got a glimpse simply of the supernatural light which came from the person of the glorified Redeemer, and he was instantly stricken down with blindness. When afterwards he speaks of this brief interview he mentions it as premature; that is, it was as though he (St. Paul) was born (changed and glorified) before the due time. Compare Acts 9:3-9 with 1 Cor. 15:8.

What must we, of necessity conclude from all this? Nothing less than the fact that no mortal human being will ever be able to look upon the unveiled glory of Christ and live. This is in harmony with what we learn concerning heavenly beings in other Scriptures. When it has been necessary in the Divine Plan that such should appear to mortal men, it has always been in an earthly, human form, and with garments the same as earthly beings; or, as in a few instances, so veiled and hidden as not to startle, or to cause death. The saints, the overcomers of this Gospel Age, who are destined to bear the image of the heavenly, when they put off their mortal bodies, and assume their heavenly bodies and heavenly state, will then, and not until then, be able to see Him as He is.

Keeping these things in mind, and remembering also the fact that heavenly beings, and of course our glorified Lord, have the power to be present (not omnipresent) in the earth, and yet to be invisible to the physical eye, will prepare us to understand and appreciate some Scriptures which refer to the Second Advent that are not generally understood.

THE PAROUSIA OR PRESENCE OF OUR LORD

"Tell us, when these things will be? and what will be the sign of Thy Presence, and of the consummation of the Age."--Matt. 24:3.

It seems scarcely necessary, even in a general way, to speak of the time of Christ's Second Advent, because among those who believe the Bible to be God's Word, most all are agreed that it will occur at the close of this Age, in that period, however long or short, called by the Savior the "Harvest," or the "end of the Age."

In the words quoted above, the word translated "world" should be "Age," which of course means a definite period of time. But it is not this we desire to notice; rather it is the word translated "coming." A glance at a reliable Concordance will reveal the fact that the words rendered "come," "coming," etc., in the Common Version, are translated from no less than thirty-two Greek words, each one expressing a different shade of meaning. For instance, one Greek word is employed to describe the *act* of coming, as on the way, another the *moment* of arrival, and still another ("Parousia") the thought of being present, or being alongside of, or, to express it in one English word, presence.

It is this latter word, "Parousia," that is employed in this question of the disciples. It is not that they were desirous of knowing what sign would be given to indicate the moment when He would leave heaven, or the act of His coming, or even the moment of His arrival. The meaning of the question is made clear without any need of explanation, when we translate it as in the Diaglott, or as in the margin of the Revised Version. Thus translated the question is, "What will be the sign of Thy *presence* and the consummation of the Age?"

If this is the correct translation, and there is not the slightest ground for doubt, then it becomes evident that the information the disciples desired, was, *not* what would be the sign that would indicate the nearness of the time when He would *start*, or *be coming*, or *arrive*; rather, it was, what would be the sign that would indicate His *Presence* after He had made His Second Advent to earth. And it is this question particularly, and things naturally associated with it, that the discourse of the Savior is designed to answer.

So startling and strange is this thought to the mind of one accustomed to think of the Lord's coming as a *visible* bodily presence manifested to the physical sight and senses of all mankind, and to associate it with supernatural sights and sounds, such as the figurative descriptions would seem to indicate, that it is almost immediately, without examination, rejected and scouted at as preposterous.

We hear it frequently said by some who are not prepared to admit the possibility of Christ's being actually present in person at His Second Advent, and yet known only to such who through a knowledge of the prophetic Word are enabled to see it by the eye of faith, that the Greek word "*Parousia*" contains not only the idea of "Presence," but that it also *implies*, at least, the thought of a previous absence and coming. But even if this were true it would not, in any degree whatever, change the question asked by the disciples.

In the first place the Revised Version recognizes "Presence" to be the correct translation by inserting it in the margin; and in Young's Concordance, the meaning given, as shown above, is "*being alongside of,*" and

"*presence*." But we are still further confirmed in this thought when we learn that even in our Common Version the word "parousia" is twice translated "presence," because any other translation would be utterly inconsistent. The two passages are found in 2 Cor. 10:10 and Phil. 2:12. The first one reads as translated in the Common Version: "But his [St. Paul's] bodily *presence* [*parousia*] is weak." Let the reader notice how entirely foreign to the true meaning this passage would be, if translated, as in the other twenty-two cases. It would read: "His bodily *coming* is weak."

The truth of the matter is, that only in the *context* is the thought of a previous absence discovered. And it is very evident that the Savior in this discourse of Matt. 24, refers to His long absence, and of His *erchomai* (coming back); it is in the context alone that we learn of His coming and arrival.

AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

"For as the days of Noah, thus will be the presence of the Son of Man. For as in those days, those before the deluge, they were eating and drinking, marrying and pledging in marriage, till the day that Noah entered the ark, and understood not till the deluge came and swept them all away; thus will be the presence of the Son of Man."--Matt. 24:37-39. (Diaglott.)

A careful consideration of these words, and keeping in mind the correct translation, will enable us to see that our Lord is speaking of His *presence* and not of His coming. He is making a comparison. Let the reader note carefully what the comparison is. It is *not* between the coming of Noah and the coming of the Son of Man; neither is it between the coming of the flood and the coming of the Son of Man, The *coming* of the Son of Man is not referred to in these verses at all; rather it is the *presence* of the Son of Man. It is true that the flood is compared to the great fiery troubles that are to come as a result of the Presence of the Son of Man, but these troubles do not eventuate and reach their climax until some time after His arrival.

The comparison, then, is between the days of Noah and the days of the Son of Man; and this is precisely what we learn in Luke 17:26, where the same momentous occurrences were spoken of by the Savior on another occasion. The words are: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be also in the days of the Son of Man." It is necessary to settle definitely this point, before being able to apprehend or appreciate what is meant by the *days* of the Son of Man.

The days of the Son of Man, generally speaking, are the days of His reigning over the nations--the Millennial Day. But it is essential to distinguish between the comparatively short *opening* period of the Millennial Day, and the longer period of this *manifested* reign with His saints over the nations. The *first* and brief period is the transition or overlapping period from this present Age to the Millennial Age. The Scriptures everywhere make a distinction between this overlapping period and the longer one to follow.

The first period of the days of the Son of Man is a harvest period--a time when the fruitage of the Age will be gathered into the heavenly garner. It is a time of sifting and separating in the professed Church; a time of judgment upon the nations--a dispensation of troubles and calamities upon them, finally resulting in what the

Scriptures call the conflict of Armageddon or the great day of God Almighty, when the field (the world) will be cleared of tares (things that offend and do iniquity), and thus prepared for another sowing.

The second phase of these days of the Son of Man will be that which follows this final conflict, which will be nothing less than the complete establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth, under the rulership of the Son of Man and His saints.

It is the *opening* period to which the Savior refers in the language: "As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be also in the days of the Son of Man;" or, as in Matthew's Gospel: "For as the days of Noah, thus will he the *presence* of the Son of Man." These words of our Lord plainly declare that the Son of Man will be present during this overlapping Harvest period. This is the period of His "*Parousia*" (*Presence*) as distinguished from His "*Apocalupsis*" (manifestation) later.

Until the reader has come to see clearly that the Scriptures speak of this overlapping period, designating it as the "Day of the Lord," the "days of the Son of Man," and the "harvest, which is the end of the Age," he is unprepared to note the next thing in the order of consideration, which is, "What will be the sign of Thy presence, and of the consummation of the Age?"

This question involves three propositions: first, the *fact* of His Presence; second, the *sign* of His Presence; and, third, the *time* when His Presence will be made known to the world; as the context plainly declares that there will be a particular time when the world will become aware of His Presence.--Verse 30, last clause.

The first two propositions we leave for a later consideration. Concerning the question of the world's consciousness of the days of the Son of Man, the day of His "Parousia," we have the answer contained in the points of similarity especially noted by the Savior as characterizing the unbelieving world in both these periods; namely, "the days of Noah" and "the days the Son of Man."

Mark well the answer of our Lord. It is *not* that wickedness would abound, as is undoubtedly true of both these periods. Wickedness has always abounded, and its predominance is not a remarkable thing as distinguishing these days from any other period. Yet it is the only thing that could possibly reveal the most momentous and startling fact that the Son of Man would be present, and be doing a work, while the unbelieving world would be utterly unconscious of it. Note His words: "For as in those days, those before the deluge, *they were eating and drinking, marrying, and pledging in marriage*, till the day that Noah entered the ark, *and understood not*, till the deluge came, and swept them all away; *thus will be the presence of the Son of Man.*"

Thus plainly does the Great Teacher answer the question of His beloved disciples, so far as it relates to the world. The answer is: *The world will have no sign of His Presence*, nor will they understand anything that is said about it, *until* the Harvest period is ended, and the fiery troubles, *at the end* of the Harvest period, have burst in all their fury on the earth. "*Then shall they see [Greek *horao*, discern, take heed--not see with their physical eyes] the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven [the intense fiery troubles which then make manifest to the whole world that the new order of things has begun] with great majesty and power."* Compare Matt. 24:30 with Isa. 19:1; Psa. 97:1, 2; Jer. 4:13, where the symbolic nature of coming in the clouds is explained.

It will be at this time that the words of Rev. 1 :7: "Behold He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see [Greek *horao*, discern, take heed] Him, and those who pierced Him and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him," will have their fulfilment.

YOU BRETHREN ARE NOT IN DARKNESS

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you do not need to be written to; for you yourselves know accurately, that the Lord's day is coming like a thief at night."--1 Thess. 5:1,2, 4.

It is very evident that up *to the time* of our Lord's coming (*erchomai*, arrival) in the beginning of the Harvest period, no one, not even the most watchful saints, will have *clear, definite* knowledge concerning the day of His arrival. This is implied in the Savior's words: "Watch, therefore, because you do not know at what day your Master will come [arrive]."--Matt. 24:42.

Those, however, who are familiar with the "sure word of prophecy," the "light in the dark place," will have, before His arrival, an all-sufficient evidence that it is near, even at the doors, although in ignorance of the *manner* of His coming. It is a most startling yet precious thought, however, that while the world, and the unfaithful and worldly-minded believer, will be utterly in darkness concerning the fact of the Savior's arrival and presence, there will be those among the last witnessing members of His Body on earth who will be made aware of it. This knowledge will not be obtained through startling signs or special manifestations, but through the "more sure word of prophecy."

The world has never believed in prophecy, neither have the masses of the professing Church, hence their ignorance. But it is a sad fact that some believers will not be sufficiently appreciative of the light at the very time it is needed. These, however, will be given every opportunity to profit by the light of Present Truth, shining on the pages of holy prophecy; but failing to make proper use of it, there can be but one result they will gradually take the position of the unfaithful servant class who in the parable say, "My Lord tarries" (verse 48); and even may go so far as to use the language of the scoffer and say, "Where is the promise of His *Presence*?" (2 Pet. 3:2.) For such nothing else remains but to be left in ignorance of their Lord's Presence, until with the world they are made aware of the days of the Son of Man by the coming in of the awful flood of fiery troubles, and thus to find themselves shut out of the "Marriage Feast," vainly knocking for admittance. Compare Matt. 24:48; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4; Matt. 25:11, 12. (Diaglott.)

Prophecy was given, not for the benefit of the world, but solely for the edification and encouragement of the household of faith, particularly those living in the "time of the end." (See Dan. 12:4-13.) It was on account of a lack of understanding of prophecy that the nominal house of Israel stumbled and failed to recognize the *presence*, of the Messiah in their midst", in the end of *their* Age. "They knew Him not nor yet the voices of the prophets, which were read every Sabbath day." Nominal Christendom has stumbled on this account also. It is so pointed out on the pages of prophecy: "He shall be for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel."--Isa. 8:14.

How important a place, then, does Divine prophecy hold in these closing Harvest days! How essential it is that we give heed to, this God-given Lamp in the dark place! All of the household of faith who do thus see its importance and give heed, will be made aware of the arrival and presence of the Son of Man; none who desire and seek the light will be left in darkness. But the oil of "Present Truth" concerning God's great Plan of the Ages, must be diligently sought and obtained before it is too late; for there comes a time when the door into the Kingdom will be closed and no amount of knowledge after that time could secure admittance.

Our Lord describes in the picture of the faithful and the unfaithful servants, the--two different classes of believers who would be living during the time of His "*Parousia*" or *Presence*. The faithful servants are thus described: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37.) Let the reader take notice that these words apply to the time of His arrival, and the *period* of His invisible Presence, and refer to servants (ministers) whose labors in the earthly vineyard are *unfinished*, but will still continue through the period of the Harvest. Seeing this will enable us to understand the import of, and to rightly apply the words which follow later: "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that He will make him ruler over all that He hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will, appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."--Luke 12:43-46.

This language clearly shows that if the heart of any of this class is not right, he will say, My Master tarries (has *not arrived*), and may smite (oppose and contradict) his fellow-servants (those who differ with him; those, therefore, who are declaring the opposite--My Lord does not tarry, but *has come, is present*). Such may eat and drink with the intemperate (become intoxicated with the spirit of the world), but the Master of that servant will come (Greek, *heko*--will have arrived) in a day not expected, and in an hour in which that servant is *not aware*, and will cut him off (from being one of the servants privileged to hand meat in due season to the household), and will appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. (Though not a hypocrite but a genuine servant, he must, because unfaithful and overcharged, have his portion with the hypocrites in the perplexity and trouble coming upon Babylon.) "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Concerning the faithful of this class of servants, the words of the Savior with regard to their being rewarded may have reference to their exaltation and reward in the Kingdom. The language, however, seems to imply a present manifestation of the Lord's blessing an increased responsibility and trust conferred during the remaining brief period of ministry to the household of faith, before their translation to the heavenly state when they shall see Him as He is and be made like Him. This service will be that of giving to the household of faith the light of "present" Truth then due to be understood. How startling and searching, and yet how blessed to the faithful servants to be thus honored by their Lord in these solemn days of the "*Parousia*."

But what is this special intrustment of the Master's possessions? It is even the light on the great Plan of the Ages, so imperfectly understood by the household of faith up to this Harvest time. Yea, it is more than this; it is, in addition, the deliverance of a special message, differing entirely from any that any previous generation of believers was commissioned to declare; and the reader who has advanced sufficiently into the light of Present Truth will be able to apprehend, and appreciate the Scriptures we purpose to consider in succeeding articles on this subject.

ANCIENT GENTILE RECORDS IN RELATION TO BIBLE CHRONOLOGY

VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND REASON

"Let your moderation be known unto all men."--Phil. 4:5

WE find in the Bible a continuous record of chronological periods in the ages of the patriarchs from the creation of Adam until Jacob's death, comprising 2315 years. From this point onward the ages of a continuing line of descent are not furnished. Henceforth chronology must be computed from a different source. In Exodus 12:40 there is a record to the effect that the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, had sojourned exactly 430 years when they left that country. With this passage *alone* before us, we might conclude that the children of Israel were actually 430 years down in Egypt. But not so. St. Paul states that the 430 years reach back to the covenant with Abraham. (Gal. 3:17.) The sojourning began with Abraham as soon as he entered the promised land, and for a time the children of *Israel* sojourned in the loins of their father Abraham.--Heb. 7:10.

Gentile history affords no assistance whatever in determining the bounds of those 430 years. Indeed, there is no need of consulting such history at all concerning this period, since the New Testament records furnish the necessary explanation. Without such explanation we would not have a clear record, the records of Gentile history for this time do not even pretend to be complete or reliable, either in the order and nature of events, or with respect to their chronological periods. The powerful Gentile nations had not yet risen.

In 1 Kings 6:1 is a chronological record covering the period from the exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign, but other Old Testament records show that the period there mentioned must have been more than 480 years. Again the New Testament comes to our assistance and determines that this was a period of 580 years--that the "four" of the text must have been originally "five."--Acts 13:18-21.

DISTINCT REFERENCES TO GENTILE DATES

After this period is determined, the next method of computing chronology is by the number of years of the reigns of succeeding kings. The Bible has preserved an account of the periods of Judah's kings down to the last king, Zedekiah. It is significant that no reference is made to any Gentile date until we reach the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, from which time we have citations to certain Gentile dates:

First, second, seventh, eighth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-third years of Nebuchadnezzar--Jer. 25:1

Dan. 2:1; Jer. 52:28-30; 2 Kings 24:12; 25:8.

First year of Evil-merodach--2 Kings 25:27.

First and third years of Belshazzar--Dan. 7:1 ; 8:1.

First year of Darius the Mede--Dan. 9:1.

First and third years of Cyrus--Ezra 1 :1 ; Dan. 10:1.

Second, fourth, and sixth years of Darius--Hag. 1 :1 ; Zech. 1 :1 ; 7:1 ; Ezra 6:15.

Third and twelfth years of Ahasuerus--Esther 1:3; 3:7.

Seventh and twentieth years of Artaxerxes--Ezra 7:8; Neh. 2:1.

Fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar--Luke 3:1.

The Bible does not state the length of the reigns of these Gentile kings. If it is to be known at all, the source of information must be found elsewhere. In the book of Esther reference is had to Gentile records. (10:2; 6:1.) Then we are confronted with the fact that the Bible chronology stops short after Gentile supremacy has begun. We find that the sacred records extend out into the Gentile era by four lines:

(1) To the first year of Evil-merodach--2 Kings 25:27.

(2) To the first year of Cyrus--2 Chron. 36:22.

(3) To the second year of Darius--Zech. 1:7, 12.

(4) To the fourth year of Darius--Zech. 7:1, 5.

Beyond these points we cannot continue with the sole use of Bible records. The 70 weeks of Daniel (not a chronological record, but a prophecy) do not start until after the last of these four points is reached. Manifestly, therefore we are dependent upon Gentile records if any definite line of chronology is to be continued beyond the years of Darius. We may determine that the first year of Darius was so many years in the A. M. period (since the creation of Adam) by using the Bible alone, but if we are to determine its place in the B. C. period, we are in need of other records than the Bible. On this point BROTHER RUSSELL has written:

"The period from the time of the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, at the close of the 70 years desolation of the land, in the first year of Cyrus, down to the date known as A.D. 1 is not covered by Bible history. But, as before stated, it is well established by secular history as a period of 536 years, Ptolemy, a learned Greek-Egyptian, a

geometer and astronomer, has well established these figures. They are generally accepted by scholars, and known as Ptolemy's Canon." *Studies, Vol. II, p. 51.*

"COME, NOW, LET US REASON TOGETHER"

The man of God is exhorted to show moderation (reasonableness) in all things. (Phil. 4:5.) So doing, it must be admitted that either the Bible affords a complete record of chronology from Adam to Christ or that it does not. If we admit that it does not, then it must also be admitted that something else than Bible records is required to complete the chain. Since the Bible records extend to the four points mentioned, it becomes necessary to establish from other records at least one of the following dates B. C.:

(1) The first year of Evil-merodach.

(2) The first year of Cyrus.

(3) The first year of Darius.

(Since the last two of the four points mentioned fall within the same reign, it is necessary to consider only the first year of that reign. If the first year of Darius can be located in the B. C. period, then the other years of his reign are automatically established.)

In the light of reason we would further say that whatever source of information is utilized, there should be a consistent and harmonious application of the same, and that the dates B.C. should harmonize with the Bible dates A.M. If there be any conflict with the Bible, we must reject all else, because the Bible is our *inspired* record in which we trust implicitly. We may consider these three dates A. M. as the wards of a key, ready to fit into the Gentile dates B.C., as into a lock.

Assuming, for the sake of illustration, that the period of Judah's kings, as heretofore understood, is one of 513 years, let us say that the Bible A.M. dates and the Gentile B.C. dates for these three points

are:

Bible A.M. Gentile B.C.

First of Evil-merodach 3548 561

First of Cyrus 3573 536

First of Darius 3588 521

The A.M. dates are calculated from Bible evidence alone. The year A.M. of Zedekiah's overthrow was, according to the table on page 42, Studies, Vol. II, 3522 (1656+427+430+40+6+450+513). Zedekiah reigned 11 years. 3,522 minus 11 leaves 3511 as the A.M. date of Jehoiachin's captivity, who was the predecessor of Zedekiah. Jehoiachin had been in captivity 37 full years when Evil-merodach began to reign. (2 Kings 25:27.) 3511 plus 37 equals 3548 as the A.M. date of the first year of Evil-merodach.

The first year of Cyrus marked the end of the 70 years of servitude.* just as one might have misunderstood the 430 years of Ex. 12:40 to mean 430 years for all Israel in Egypt, so the 70 years of Jeremiah can be misunderstood to mean 70 years for the entire nation in Babylon; but as the 430 years began with Abraham, so the 70 years of servitude began with Daniel, as various Bible texts demonstrate. The servitude started in the third year of Jehoiakim. From that year to the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign was 19 years. 3522 minus 19 leaves 3503, the year A.M. of the third of Jehoiakim and the beginning of the 70 years of servitude. Those 70 years added to 3503 A.M. equals 3573 A.M. as the first year of Cyrus.

The fourth year of Darius ended 70 years (Zech. 7:1,5) from 3522 A.M., which would be 3592 A.M., thus starting his reign in 3588 A.M.

GENTILE DATES ESTABLISHED INDEPENDENTLY

The Gentile dates for the same three points are established by Ptolemy's Canon, *independently of the Bible. Yet they harmonize exactly, because either of the two latter dates measured from the first date gives the same result in either table.* Once more, reason bids us to be moderate and to admit that if we accept the last two dates (Gentile dates) as reliable, we should also accept the first one, because between 561 and 536 are only 25 years. The length of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as established by evidence outside of the Bible is 43 years. The Bible records make that reign about 44 years in length, a very slight difference. But how could we account for a difference of 19 years in the next immediate period of 25 years (according to Ptolemy) or 44 years (if the eleventh year of Zedekiah was 606 B. C. as we once thought)? That would be entirely at violence with any reasonable consideration, and it is also really out of harmony with the Bible evidence. If we are going to accept Ptolemy for 536 B. C., let us admit that he is either right or wrong about 561 B. C., which is only 25 years removed. If he is wrong to the extent of 19 years concerning 561, *then we have most serious grounds to doubt his 536 date also.* In that event, we should be consistent and reject both dates. Surely, we are not to follow some hocus-pocus method of reasoning, just hit or miss, or to pick out only what suits our preferences.

*We are not considering the *desolation* of the land in this connection. That matter has been treated at length in previous issues of this journal.

WHERE SECULAR AUTHORITY BECOMES RELIABLE

It does not seem altogether compatible with reason to regard the 536 B. C. date as marking a *sudden* beginning of secular reliability; that in the twinkling of an eye, so to speak, darkness turns into day and uncertainty into unquestionable assurance. There is just as much ground for doubting some secular dates *after* 536 B.C. as any for a century prior thereto. For instance, the secular date for the twentieth year of Artaxerxes is in dispute. Some

few authorities disagree with what is very generally accepted as the date of Artaxerxes' twentieth year by ten years. BROTHER RUSSELL was amongst the few. We do not reach the stage of certainty until the days of Julius Caesar, who established the Julian calendar. Back of that, until the seventh century B.C., we have what may be termed, from this standpoint of dead certainty, a twilight zone, in which the fabled ages *gradually* merge into definite historical dates. The Gentile records of this merging period must be regarded in the light of reason. On pages 36 to 38, inclusive, of Volume II, *Studies in the Scriptures*, BROTHER RUSSELL has made some pertinent remarks along this line. The following is a brief quotation:

"As with history, so with dates: the world has, aside from the Bible, no means of tracing its chronology farther back than B.C. 776. On this subject we quote Prof. Fisher, of Yale College. He says: 'An exact method of establishing dates was slowly reached. The invention of eras was indispensable to this end. *The earliest definite time for the dating of events was established in Babylon--the era of Nabonassar, 747 B.C. The Greeks (from about 300 B.C.) dated events from the first recorded victory at the Olympic games, 776 B.C. These games occurred every fourth year. Each Olympiad was thus a period of four years. The Romans, although not for some centuries after the founding of Rome, dated from that event, i.e., from 753 B.C.'*"

Thus it appears that a reasonable degree of secular reliability starts from 776 or 747 or 753, according to the particular national records involved. Now, 536 B. C. falls *within* this period of reasonable dependence. The Bible mentions a Gentile date for the first time in connection with Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and since he was the head of Gentile dominion, it seems very appropriate to regard the beginning of his reign as being at least approximately correctly dated, in the Gentile records. The Bible chronology continues on beyond this point *just far enough to demonstrate that Gentile dates are here dependable*, because the Bible *proves* them so. From Nebuchadnezzar to Darius

Gentile dates are established from sources independent of the Bible, and yet the Bible records covering this same period *agree* with those Gentile dates. There is no conflict between the two, unless it be some slight difference of a year or two. There is no such difference as 18 or 20 years at any point within this period. Josephus seems to be the only questionable authority who has written concerning this time. Furthermore, we have a safety valve in the fact that Gentile records do not cover just *one* nation. There are several influential nations for this period--Babylon, Media, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, besides others. Their different records check against each other; so that from an examination of *all* of them a reasonably correct table of Gentile dates may be compiled. It is somewhat on the order of a complex system of bookkeeping whereby the whole must balance.

OUR REASONABLE CONCLUSIONS

The reasonable conclusions we draw from our study of this matter are that the Bible is our inspired record; that it must be taken as unquestioned authority and all else rejected if there is any conflict; that the Bible does not furnish a line of chronology, further than the days of Darius the Persian; that Bible dates and Gentile date; gradually flow together from the days, of Nebuchadnezzar onward, and that Gentile records covering the period from Nebuchadnezzar to Darius are, in the main, proved correct by indisputable evidence found in the Bible, just as the New Testament shows the correct application of the 430 years of Exodus 12:40, so Zech. 1:12 and 7:5, together with the book of Haggai, throws an explanation upon the 70 years of desolation of the land, showing where those years end. The whole matter from every reasonable standpoint, in the light of all the Scriptures bearing on the matter and of the results we obtain upon applying the different lines of prophecy to the

revised scale of chronology, reveals that the articles heretofore published in this journal along these lines have the backing of Scriptural evidence and sound reasoning, showing how Gentile dates *supplement* (but do not *contradict*) the Bible dates, and explaining why there is now a "tarrying" time since the year 1914. Furthermore, we are afforded a definite time still future when we may expect some interesting events among the Jews and in the Gentile nations of earth, all of which will prove that the great Divine Plan of the Ages has been fulfilled exactly on time, according to the wisdom and power of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Let us, then, look up and lift up our heads, knowing that our deliverance draweth nigh.

THE WORD OF TRUTH

The Word of Truth is like a stained-glass window rare,
We stand *outside* and gaze, but see no beauty there,
No fair design, naught but confusion we behold;
'Tis only from *within* the glory will unfold,
And he who would drink in the rapture of the view
Must climb the winding stair, the portal enter, through.

The sacred door of Truth's cathedral is most low,
And all who fain would enter there the knee must bow
In deep humility. But once inside, the light
Of day streams through and makes each color heavenly bright,
The Master's great design we see, our hands we raise
In reverent ecstasy of wonder, love and praise!

ANTI-CHRIST FIRST, THEN CHRIST

"Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."--2 Thes. 2:3

VARIOUS are the views and opinions advocated concerning the manner in which this dispensation is to close, and concerning the Harvest period of this Age. Amongst the interpretations that have attained considerable eminence amongst prophetic students is the one which teaches that the prophecies respecting the "falling away" and the revelation of the "man of sin" (commonly called Anti-Christ) are yet to have their fulfilment. To our understanding, no teaching is more misleading, or more confusing to the mind in the study of prophecy concerning these closing days of the Age and our nearness to the establishment of the Lord's Millennial Kingdom, than the above line of interpretation.

Those who hold to this view teach that there is yet to be a division of the old Roman world into just ten kingdoms, by a dreadful war; and that from among the peoples of these kingdoms a wicked king, an individual man (the Anti-Christ), will arise, to whom these ten kings, as well as the whole world, will bow down and worship. This teaching results from a failure to see that the ten kingdoms referred to by the ten horns on the fourth beast of Daniel 7, Revelation 13, etc., all came to view in connection with the breaking up of the Western Roman Empire, by the barbaric hordes of the North in the close of the fifth century. There has scarcely been any dissent from the view that the Roman Empire and its subdivisions are described by *the fourth beast* of Daniel 7, and that it is the various aspects of the kingdoms that occupied the territory of Western Rome that are referred to in the visions of the Dragon and the Beast of Revelation.

It is frequently said by those who are looking for an *individual* Anti-Christ, that because historians and prophetic writers are not all agreed in enumerating and naming the kingdoms into which the Western Roman Empire was divided, this proves that such a division as described by the Prophet is to be looked for in the future and not in the past. A sufficient answer to this objection is, that it is chiefly because of numbering these kingdoms to more or less the *fullest* extent of the territory conquered by the Roman power, and to epochs earlier or later in the prolonged period during which these kingdoms were establishing themselves on the territory of the Roman world, that the historians and prophetic writers differ more or less with each other in enumerating and naming these kingdoms.

It seems very plain that the proper epoch to look for these ten kingdoms is about 476 A.D., or shortly after, when Western Rome fell, and the capital city, Rome, came into possession of one of these kingdoms. Furthermore, the ten kingdoms should be looked for on the territory of the *Western* Roman Empire only. It was in A.D. 533 that the famous decree of Justinian, constituting the bishop of Rome head over all the churches of Christendom, occurred. Mr. Elliott, who drew up the list of these kingdoms from historic records without consulting prophetic commentaries, thus enumerates them as they existed in 532 A.D.:

The Anglo-Saxons, the Franks of Central, Alleman-Franks of Eastern, Burgundian-Franks of Southeastern France, the Visigoths, the Suevi, the Vandals, the Ostrogoths in Italy, the Bavarians, and the Lombards--*ten* in all. The "little horn" which was to come up among them has had a marvelous fulfilment, with not a single element lacking, in the long line of Papal monarchs who for over twelve centuries, wielded so mighty an influence among the nations of Europe, the territory of Western Rome, and who, just before the great Reformation, ruled *paramount* in the Roman earth. And as the "man of sin" of 2 Thessalonians is understood by all as identical with this "little horn," it likewise is fulfilled prophecy.

A very frequent statement made by Futurist expounders of prophecy is, that the Church of the Gospel Age is nowhere referred to in prophecy. Such interpreters place the fulfilment of the whole book of Revelation from chapter four, onward, in the future, making it refer to events *after* the Church has been glorified. This interpretation makes Christ to come before Anti-Christ, whereas the prophecy of St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians plainly states that the "man of sin" (the Anti-Christ) comes first.

THE REVELATION OF THE MAN OF SIN

The Scriptures referring to the apostasy that was to come before Christ's Second Advent, were given in such a way as to keep the believers of each generation in an attitude of expectancy of Christ's Second Coming. The first New Testament prophecy respecting the apostasy is found in the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 2. There was nothing in this prediction that, to the early Church, would seem to require a longer time for fulfilment than the life-time of believers who read or heard read to them the prophecy. In fact, the statement is made by St. Paul in connection with its incipient beginning, "The mystery of iniquity doth *already* work," thus awakening an expectancy of the imminency of Christ's return. They knew, however, that *before* He came Anti-Christ must appear.

Again, when St. John wrote his first epistle, about forty years later, we hear him saying (undoubtedly referring to this prophecy of St. Paul): "Little children, *it is the last time*: and as ye have *heard* that Anti-Christ shall come, even now are there many Anti-Christ; whereby we know that it is the last time," (1 John 2:18.) And that St. John believed that Anti-Christ was to be, not an infidel power, as some Futurists teach, but a false profession of Christ, the words that follow are evidence: "They *went out* from us."

We can see from these statements of St. Paul and St. John, that up to the close of the first century of the Church's history, the revelation was so given as to keep the Savior's return an ever approaching event. To the early Church, Anti-Christ would seem to be one individual. That we may see the progressive understanding of the Thessalonian prophecy, we need only to refer to the history of the Church a few centuries later. With this prophecy of Thessalonians in their possession, we see many prominent teachers in the Church waiting for the removal of the Roman emperor, and expecting the Anti-Christ (who to them would seem short-lived) to occupy the Roman emperor's place at Rome. St. Paul spoke of a hindrance to Anti-Christ's rise. Concerning what was the "let" (hindrance) to the manifestation of the "man of sin" referred to in 2 Thes. 2, an eminent writer has said: "We have the consenting testimony of the early Fathers from Iraeneus, the disciple of the disciple of St. John, down to Chrysostom and Jerome, to the effect that it was understood to be the *imperial power* ruling and residing at Rome."*

Iraeneus in his work "Against Heresies," Book V, chapter XXX, says:

"Let them await in the first place, the *division of the [Roman] kingdom into ten*; then, *in the next place*, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdoms (let them learn) to acknowledge that *he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself* and shall terrify these sons of men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number (666) is truly the abomination of desolation."

"Paul distinctly tells us that he knew, and that the Thessalonians knew what that hindrance was, and that it was then in existence. The early Church through the writings of the Fathers tells us what it knew upon the subject, and with unanimity affirms that this "let" or hindrance was the *Roman empire as governed by the Caesars*; that

*Horae Apocalypticae, Vol. 111, p. 92.

while the Caesars held imperial power it was impossible for the predicted Anti-Christ to arise, and that on the fall

of the Caesars he would rise. Here we have a point on which Paul affirms the existence of knowledge in the Christian Church. The early Church knew, he says, what this hindrance was. The early Church tells us what it did know upon the subject, and no one in these days can be in a position to contradict its testimony as to what Paul had, by word of mouth *only*, told the Thessalonians. It is a point on which ancient tradition alone can have any authority. Modern speculation is positively impertinent on such a subject."

EARLY CHRISTIAN TEACHERS DISCERNED APPROACH OF MAN OF SIN IN THEIR DAY

Tertullian, a Christian writer of the third century said, referring to St. Paul's prophecy: "Now ye know what detaineth that he might be revealed in his time, for the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hinders must hinder until he be taken out of the way. *What obstacle is there but the Roman state*; the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Anti-Christ that the Beast, Anti-Christ, with his false prophet may wage war against the Church of God."

In the same century we have Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, saying: "We are now in the end of the consummation of the world, the fatal time of Anti-Christ is at hand. Again, in the fourth century, we have the Christian orator Lactantius saying, "This [the predicted Anti-Christ] shall come when the time of the Roman empire shall be fulfilled and the consummation of the world approach."

During the long period of Papal supremacy, beginning shortly after these writers lived, the hope of Christ's imminent coming seems to have been held only by a few, among whom were the Waldenses. These believed that the succession of Roman bishops was the "man of sin," the "little horn," the Anti-Christ. But when we reach the sixteenth century, the period of the Protestant Reformation, we see the Reformers looking back over the long, dark career of Papal rule and influence, recognizing this terrible system as the predicted Anti-Christ of Scripture. Again was the hope of Christ's imminent coming revived, as we see by referring to the writings of the Reformers. Said Luther in 1517: "I believe that all the signs which precede the last day have happened. The 'son of perdition' is revealed." Latimer, in 1535, before his martyrdom, referring to the Thessalonian prophecy, said: "Anti-Christ is already known throughout the world, *wherefore the day is not far off.*" Bradford, the martyr, in 1555, uttered this warning: "O England, England, beware of Anti-Christ. Take heed he doth not deceive thee . . . I trust our Redeemer's coming is at hand." And as we come down toward our own times, with an understanding of the symbolic character of the prophetic periods being given, the hope revived and has steadily increased.

As we look back over the history of the career of this evil system, and in the light of these days on the "sure word of prophecy" study the falling away from the faith of the first century, the revelation, the development, the reign, and the downfall of the temporal power of this great evil system, we can with still greater, and with a more sure and certain hope look up and know that our deliverance draweth near Anti-Christ has come, and nearly every prophetic utterance concerning him is in the past. We therefore look no more for Anti-Christ, but for the true Christ to be made manifest. Whatever new unfolding of Anti-Christ there may be yet in the near future, will be found only in a movement of that power whose head now rules from Rome.

If Anti-Christ is future, it must be a world-wide power. If a world-wide power, dominating all people and compelling all persons to receive his mark, then he must be the head of a world-wide empire, autocratic and sovereign. Daniel's prophecies, however, inform us that there were to be in the years of mortal dominion but

four supreme empires. The iron kingdom of the Caesars was the fourth empire, whose power when it fell was distributed among the ten kingdoms. These ten kingdoms, as history shows, gave their support to the "little horn" of Papacy, whose supremacy over these ten kingdoms has ceased. The fifth empire is God's, as represented in Christ and His joint-heirs. It certainly is impossible to get a power such as is described in these visions and prophecies of Anti-Christ between the fourth and fifth kingdoms. One has truthfully said:

"If we cannot, what then is the future diabolical *man* who is to sit on the throne of the world? How does he get into the *future* prophetic field? Only one answer is possible, viz., by fanciful, lawless interpretation of sacred prophecy. This Anti-Christ is squeezed in to fill a vast place, in spite of the Divine Plan. But he is not in God's scheme, he is man-made, a child of the novitiate school of interpreters. Let us look for Christ who is ready to come and will kill all opposers to His reign."

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

--SEPTEMBER 3--NEH. 3:1--7:4--

Golden Text.--"Our God will fight for us."--Neh. 4:20

NEHEMIAH'S earnest desire to spend himself and his service for the Lord's glory and for the blessing of his people inspired his prayers, and such prayers always bring an answer of some kind: such prayers mean faith and cooperating works. Charles Reade, the converted novelist, briefly sums up the circumstances by which Nehemiah's heart-burden was brought to the favorable attention of the king, as follows:

"The answer came (1) through an arbitrary, self-willed and passionate king, who a few years before had issued an edict against Jerusalem, and put a stop to the building of its walls. (Ezra 4:8-24.) (2) It came through Nehemiah himself, and the feelings which prompted his prayer. The burden of his spirit and the earnestness of his fasting and praying left their marks on his countenance. Usually he was able to conceal his heart's sorrow (2:1); or during these four months it was the turn of others to serve, the king. When he came again before the king the change was apparent, and the king noticed it. 'Why is your countenance sad?' No reply. 'You are not sick?' Still no reply. 'This is sorrow and nothing else.' Then Nehemiah was sore afraid, and I will tell you why. His life was in danger. Even a modern autocrat like Louis XIV expected everybody's face to shine if he did but appear, and how much more an Artaxerxes. If he had ordered this melancholy visage away to prison or death it would have been justified by precedent."

God gave Nehemiah favor with the king so that he not only was permitted leave of absence to engage in the work which his heart yearned for, but in addition he was appointed Governor of Judea, with letters instructing other governors en route to Jerusalem to grant him necessary aid, together with a safe military escort. Apparently the preparations for the journey occupied nearly a month, and the journey itself about three months, bringing Nehemiah and his retinue of servants to Jerusalem about July.

It will be remembered that Ezra, in making this journey through a country infested with thieves and brigands, would not ask a military escort from the king lest it should seem a reflection against the Divine providential care, of which he had spoken to the king; but Nehemiah, being offered the escort, did not permit any spirit of bravado to hinder his acceptance of it. In both cases we see that the right course was pursued, though in some

respects the conditions were opposites. Spiritual Israelites need to learn both of these lessons--to trust fully in the Lord's provision, be it great or small, and in no case to refuse reasonable safeguards, when under the Lord's providence they are furnished. We remember that one of our Lord's temptations was along this line to perform a hazardous action for which there was no necessity--to leap from the pinnacle of the Temple. Frequently the Lord's people are beset by the great Adversary to attempt foolish or impossible or unnecessary things, simply to *show their faith*. Such should take a lesson from our Lord's reply in His temptation, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"--we are not to tempt Divine providence, nor to expect miracles to be wrought on our behalf where the Divine arrangement has not made them necessary.

INSPECTION PRECEDES REFORMATION

On his arrival at Jerusalem, Nehemiah did not at first reveal his plans; but secretly, in company with his personal attendants, he took a survey of the condition of the city walls by moonlight for three nights, meanwhile maturing in his mind the plan he was about to suggest. There is a valuable lesson here for spiritual Israelites: how necessary it is that if we desire to do a good work we first thoroughly inform ourselves respecting the needs of the case, so that our course of conduct may be both reasonable and efficient. This is none the less true and important if the walls which need repairing and building are the walls of spiritual Zion, the Church of the living God, the holy Jerusalem; nor less so if they are the walls of our characters, our own hearts, our own dispositions. We want to take a full survey of the weaknesses and deficiencies in order to be able, under the Lord's direction and by His assistance, to build up ourselves in the most holy faith, and to similarly build up others of the true Zion. Inspection properly precedes intelligent and profitable reformation of any kind.

Nehemiah did not begin his work by chiding his brethren with unfaithfulness to God or lack of enterprise, etc.; such a course would have further discouraged them, and would have made them feel antagonistic, and perhaps, to say, "You will see how it is yourself when you are here a few years," and some would then have taken pleasure in his failure to do more than they had accomplished. Neither did he begin by boastfully saying, "I have come here to do such a work, and within an incredibly short time you will see it accomplished; I will accomplish in days what you have failed to accomplish in as many years." To have taken such a course would have been to arouse the opposition of the very ones without whose aid his mission, humanly speaking, would be sure to be a failure.

Many Christian people can learn a valuable lesson here: the lesson that whoever desires to be a co-worker with God should work in the Lord's way and be guided by the spirit of love--for love does not think unkindly or ungenerously or slightingly of the efforts of others, nor is it boastful. On the contrary, its trust is in the Lord, and its boast therefore must be in Him. This lesson is valuable to us also in respect to individual efforts in our own hearts--to build up good characters acceptable in God's sight through Christ Jesus. We are to remember that nothing is gained, but much to be lost, by thinking or feeling boastfully of what we hope to attain in self-control and character-likeness to the Lord: nor is much to be gained by mourning and weeping over misspent opportunities of the past. The proper course is to begin work afresh with confidence, not in ourselves, but in Him who called us and who has given such exceeding great and precious promises. This is our way to success in individual development, and also in our labors upon the walls of Zion, as it was Nehemiah's successful method for the building of the natural, typical Jerusalem.

REFORM WORK AT HOME

In answer to his prayer and earnest study, God gave Nehemiah great wisdom and tact in his work, and calling together the chief representatives of the people he laid before them his plans, in which they were all to be associates and partners in whatever blessing and honor might accrue from this service. His plan was to divide the work on the wall so that each person of prominence and capability should have a certain share of the work and the responsibility, as well as of the subsequent honor and success. Moreover, his plan was that each should undertake the building of the wall nearest to his own residence: he would not only be interested in having the work done, but also in having it substantial, (1), because of the credit for the rapid and good workmanship, and (2) because he would be anxious that the wall should be strong in the vicinity of his own home.

There is a lesson here for us: our Lord declares that He gave "to every man [in the Church] his work" (Mark 13:34), represented by his talents, and each should seek to know his talents and to use them, and should not attempt to use the talents not given him, and a work therefore not committed to him. Again, each of us should begin "over against his house"--we, too, should begin our reform work at home.

In our experience in character-building, the same lesson of turning everything to good account may be profitably applied; for instance, if by nature we are quick and impulsive, let us not only seek to restrain such impulsiveness from speaking evil and wrong, but let us exercise it in the speaking of that which is good and profitable for edifying, gradually accustoming ourselves to use this talent in a favorable and not in an unfavorable manner. Have we large combativeness, let us, while seeking to restrain this quality of our being as respects evil doing and injury to others, learn to exercise it kindly, lovingly, in opposing wrong, "in *contending* earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." And so with all the so-called baser organs of our fallen, unbalanced condition--they may all be turned to usefulness and helpfulness if but rightly directed by our wills and the spirit of a sound mind--"the mind of the Lord."

OPPOSITION TO PROGRESS

The text of our lesson particularly relates to the difficulties and emergencies which arose after Nehemiah had wisely gained the assent and cooperation of the leaders of the people, inspiring them with his enthusiasm--after the work of building the wall had been begun. Then it was that enemies and oppositions began to show themselves. The leaders of the surrounding peoples had for centuries cultivated a hatred of the Jews, (1) on account of their exclusiveness when obedient to the Lord's command; (2) because of their racial differences and animosities, including the differences of their religions; (3) they had all experienced the fact that the Israelites, when under Divine favor, were prosperous and capable beyond themselves--the same reason which today causes such a hatred of the Jew throughout Europe; (4) like birds of prey, they had been fattening at the expense of the Jews, and this marauding would be interfered with by the rebuilding of the wall and the establishment of a more permanent government in Jerusalem.

Just so is it with individuals who, having learned the weaknesses of their own characters, resolve by the grace of God to build themselves up along the lines of justice, meekness, patience, love. They immediately find themselves beset with enemies bent on hindering their work for selfish reasons; the lust of the flesh and of the eye, and the pride of life, like Philistines, Ammonites, and Arabians, take counsel together against the building up of a character with which they would not be in accord, and which would hinder the exercise of their

depraved instincts. Such a uniting of forces, such a conspiracy against the "New Creature," is not begun until he begins the work of rectifying, building in his life the wall of righteousness.

Similarly, this illustrates the position of the Lord's people as a Church; so long as they live carelessly, drowsily, inattentive to the doctrinal and the practical bulwarks of Zion, they are not subjected to specific attacks from the great enemy and his deluded servants; but from the time that they realize that in the rubbish pile of human tradition and falsity are to be found gold, silver and precious stones for the erection of the walls of Zion--from the moment that they begin to use the same, and to build according to the original pattern, contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints--from that moment, we say, they are subjected to the conspiracies of the great deceiver and his Philistine and Ishmael hosts--Babylon--and then for the first time every faction and party is ready to conspire and unite against them, wroth, angry, not because injury has been done them, but because the progress of the Truth is of itself a rebuke to all who are not of the Truth.

Apparently the most zealous of the Israelites resided in Jerusalem, or near it, while others, less zealous, resided in various favorable localities nearer to the Samaritans, etc., and were more or less influenced by their customs, methods and views, and therefore were less in sympathy with the repair work at Jerusalem. These seemingly are referred to as Judah (4:10), and expressed their doubts respecting the prosperity of the work, saying that it was useless to attempt so great a work because of the amount of rubbish requiring to be handled and disposed of, both to make ready for the work on the foundations and also to secure the suitable building stones. These early proclaimed that the laborers would soon weary of their task, and the builders be forced to suspend the work. They were not enemies of the Jews, and are not here classed as their adversaries, but they were lacking in faith, and hence were hindrances to the work by reason of their discouraging suggestions just so in the individual case, where reforms and character-building are commenced, he finds in himself various disheartening suggestions respecting the difficulties and impossibility of the work he is undertaking. These must be resisted. Similarly, in the work of Zion, in building up the waste places, re-assembling the stones of precious truth from the rubbish-heaps of sectarianism; there are those who are in sympathy with the apostolic teachings who nevertheless clearly discourage the builders, and are thus, without intending it, to a considerable extent adversaries of the work.

As for the open adversaries, their first attempt was to stop the work with ridicule (2:9; 4:1-3), "Even that which they build, if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone walls." Sarcasm is one of the most successful of our Adversary's weapons, and with it he stays many and hinders many from progress in the work of building their own characters and from the work of building upon the walls of the true Zion; but the faithful are not to be disconcerted by scorn or ridicule or irony; they build on and their adversary becomes the more aggressive as he finds that he cannot stop them with ridicule, So it was with these open adversaries of Nehemiah and his faithful co-workers. They planned a sudden assault by which they would take the builders unawares, and by killing off some of their leaders would stop the work.

THE LORD HATH COUNSELED HIS PEOPLE

The people of Judah who did not favor the building and who lived amongst the Samaritans, etc., learned of this conspiracy, and having brotherly interest in the builders, sent them word, apparently advising them to desist from the work lest it would bring against them the destruction contemplated. But the builders were not to be thus intimidated, and instead of stopping the work they armed themselves for defense, Nehemiah setting bodies

of men upon the eminences behind the lowest parts of the unfinished walls, the points where the attack would most likely be made, and where their enemies would most surely see them ready for defense. But finding them forewarned and forearmed, the projected attack was abandoned.

Just so it is with the individual: when he cannot be dissuaded from his work of character-building by sneers and sarcasm, the attempt is made to vanquish him before he has gone far in his reformatory work. He is attacked along the lines of his weaknesses by the great Adversary, and finds necessity for the armor of the Lord, the shield of faith, the sword of the spirit, the helmet of salvation, etc., that he may withstand the attacks from the fiery darts of the wicked one. And just so it is with the Lord's people as they unite together for the study of His Word, as He has counseled them--"forgetting not the assembling of themselves." The Adversary will attack them as a little company, endeavor to frustrate the object of their assembling, endeavor to dishearten them before they have made much progress in the knowledge and practice of the Truth. But if they will only go to the armory they will find that the Captain of our salvation has made abundant provision that we should not be helpless in the hands of our Adversary, for, as the Apostle declares, "we are not ignorant of his devices." And here it is well to remember: what proved so helpful to Nehemiah and his faithful little band, of which he says, "We made a prayer unto God and set a watch against them day and night." This is our Captain's instruction to the Christian soldier, "Watch and pray." Let us not forget either of these important prerequisites to safety and victory.--Eph. 6:10-17; Heb. 10:25; 2 ,Cor. 2:11.

"REMEMBER THE LORD"

Not only did Nehemiah see to the arming and preparation of his band, but additionally he stimulated their faith, saying, "Be not afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren," etc. Fear is an ennobling emotion, when it is rightly directed--toward God; it is the most weakening of emotions when it is directed toward man. Remember the Lord, who is great and terrible--far greater and more terrible than the Samaritans. "The men who remember the Lord in His power and goodness are the men who rise up against all odds, and battle evil in high places and low, with never a thought of being overborne and defeated. A readiness to fight for God's cause is a test of loving, faith filled remembrance of God." We are to remember, as soldiers of the Cross, that our Captain has instructed us that to be full of faith, full of good courage in our reliance upon Him, is a matter of primary importance in respect to our work and victory. His word is, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." In our battle against sin and everything that would hinder the work to which the Lord has called us, and to which we have consecrated ourselves, we fight for the New Creature, not for the old; yea, we expect to lay down the old nature in death, and already we reckon it dead, and put forth all of our efforts on behalf of the New Creature. And similarly our brethren for whom we are fighting are contending earnestly for their deliverance from the thralldom of sin and of error--these brethren are also New Creatures, brethren of Christ, sons of God; and the Apostle exhorts us, saying, "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren."--1 John 3: 16.

As is often the case, the preparation for the conflict was all that hindered it; and so with the Lord's people, those who most carefully prepare themselves with the armor of God are much less frequently attacked than those who neglect the armament.

Thenceforth, not only Nehemiah's servants, but all the people, seem to have maintained their armament while they prosecuted their work, and so must the Christian Church and Christians as individuals maintain their

defensive armor and keep watch against the Adversary while seeking to build up themselves and others in the most holy faith. Our faith and our works must cooperate to bring the desired success, and as success attended Nehemiah's efforts and that of his coadjutors, so success is sure to come to all of the Lord's people who follow this prescribed course. "If ye do these things ye shall never fall, but so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."--2 Pet. 1:4-11.

TEACHING THE LAW OF GOD

--SEPTEMBER 10--NEH. 8:1-18--

Golden Text:--"Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end."--Psa. 119:33.

Nehemiah was governor of Jerusalem, and after the repair of the Temple walls, noted in our last lesson, he did not consider that great work the end of his mission but rather the beginning of it. The wall was necessary first for the security of the people to arouse their national spirit, to revive their hopes in respect to the promised Kingdom of God, and afford them a practical demonstration of God's favor with them in the accomplishment of that work, and thus to lead on to trust in the accomplishment of other promises of the word still future.

In the Lord's providence the work was accomplished just at the right time to permit of the rest of the week at their homes, and then to have a general gathering to celebrate the New Year. The Jewish civil year begins with the seventh month. In God's providence the national interests were associated with the religious interests of the Jews. They were God's people, and all their political and national hopes were associated with the Divine promises, and hence a revival of interest in their city and nation and national hopes meant a revival also in their reverence for God, in their religious sentiments, in their desire to honor the Lord and obey Him, to observe the festivals which He had commanded.

Nehemiah was evidently a prudent man in such matters to begin with. Indeed we know that this is the Lord's general way of choosing those whom He may use in His service. He chooses suitable persons, and then adds His blessing to promote the outcome which He desires--as, for instance, when instructing Moses respecting the intricate devices for the Tabernacle structure, the Lord said, "Choose out from the children of Israel cunning workmen and I will put My spirit upon them" The thought is that the Lord employs as little of the miraculous as is necessary--He takes advantage of conditions as they are so far as possible, and uses them. While, therefore, the Scriptures declare, and all the facts of the case correspond to show, that not many great, not many learned, not many wise, not many noble according to the course of this world are chosen by the Lord for His special servants, we are to assume that the Lord chooses as noble, as great, and as learned as He can find who are of the right condition of heart.

LOVE AND DEVOTION FIRST

We are not to consider that qualifications are despised of the Lord, but rather to note that the Lord puts first and foremost the qualities of honesty, humility, obedience and love, and that these things being present in a number, those possessing the greatest number of other qualifications would have the preference. For instance, we may assume that the twelve Apostle chosen represented the best material for the Lord's purpose every way, yet

subsequently when Saul of Tarsus, educated, talented and wealthy, consecrated himself, saying "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" the Lord was willing to use him; and his peculiar talents, combined with his deep consecration, humility and zeal, enabled him to take a foremost place amongst the Apostles.

Nehemiah, the man of opportunity, brought to the governorship of the Jews at this important juncture, manifested his humillity and his zeal in many various ways. When calling for the convocation of a general assembly of the Israelites for the New Year's celebration, called the Feast of Trumpets, he did not ignore the worthy ones of the Lord's people and seek to take all honor to himself. On the contrary, he recognized Ezra the Scribe, a member of the priestly family, as more suitable than himself to take a prominent part in the work of educating the people in the knowledge of the Lord through His Law. Ezra's chief place of importance was the ceremony of reading the Law and. introducing it to the attention of the people. On his right hand were seven of the prominent men, on his left hand six more, and the reading was done by course, and probably participated in by many if not all of these fourteen.

The place of the reading was on the plaza of the Temple. The people, sitting about over a considerable area, arose when the Law was read, and after the reading of a section they sat down. Meantime amongst them had been scattered various of the Levites, the teachers of the people, who explained to them the meaning of the words they had heard, giving them the sense of the language. This was necessary probably for two reasons: first, that the people who had been in Babylon had more or less of a corrupt tongue or ear, while undoubtedly the Law was written and read in classical Hebrew; second, even if they had understood all the words, a particular explanation of the sentiment or meaning is sometimes both convenient and necessary. This reading of the Law in sections and expounding it both from the higher platform occupied by the fourteen officiating and also its further expounding to the people by the Levites who were in their midst, occupied all of one afternoon and a good portion of the next forenoon. The result was that, the people had an understanding of God's own Message.

"PREACH THE WORD"

Here we see the real essence of preaching, as the Apostle wrote to Timothy, "Preach the Word." The difficulty of much of the preaching of our day is that it is not the Word of God that is preached, but the traditions of the ancients, or more frequently perhaps something that has very little to do with religion at all. Higher criticism and evolution theories and general agnosticism prevail to so large an extent both in pulpit and pew that the Word of God is losing its place of importance in the minds of those who are nominally God's people. Why should they study the book which they no longer accept as Divinely inspired. Ignorance of the Scriptures is greatly on the increase amongst those who profess godliness. Undoubtedly there was great advantage in the Scripture studies of olden times, even though ignorance and superstition and the false theology of the Dark Ages gave a distorted view to much that was studied; nevertheless, fifty years ago the Scriptures were very much better known to the masses of those professing godliness than they are today. The loss is a keen one. On the other hand we know how those who have come into the light of Present Truth, and whose eyes of understanding are opened wide to a greater appreciation of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Divine character and Plan, are becoming more and more deeply interested in the study of the Word. This is sure to be the case. No religion, no theory, can be either true or helpful that does not bring us to God's Book and deepen our interest in His Message. Canon Farrar pays a splendid tribute to the value of the Bible as a civilizing influence, in the following words:

"It was the Bible that gave fire and nobleness to her (England's) language; it was the Bible that turned a dead oppression into a living Church; it was the Bible which put to flight the nightmare of ignorance before the rosy dawn of progress. . . . It was the Bible which saved England from sinking into a tenth-rate power as a vassal of cruel, ignorant, superstitious Spain, whose Dominicans and tyrants would have turned her fields into slaughterhouses as they turned those of the Netherlands, and would have made her cities reek as she made Seville reek with the bale-fires of her Inquisition. Let England cling to her open Bible."

"And what the Bible did for England, it did for the United States of America. It was the Bible that made America what she is."

"EAT THE FAT AND DRINK THE SWEET AND SEND PORTIONS"

Evidently this was the first presentation of the Law to the people since their return from captivity. Evidently Ezra had given his attention to the re-arranging of the Law and the instruction of the priests and Levites therein, but had not up to this time caused it to be promulgated amongst the people. Quite possibly it was a part of Nehemiah's wise insight as a governor to see that the explaining to the people of God's own Message would be helpful to them; that it was not sufficient that the priests and the Levites should be learned in the Law and that they should tell the people, but that the people themselves should be made to understand the Divine message. The same is true today. It will not do that others shall attempt to tell the Lords Plan, but ignore the Lord's Word, in order to have weight and influence. Those who receive the Message must know that it is more than' man's message--they must have the evidence that it is from the Lord.

When the Law was read and expounded to the people they saw at once that they had been under chastisement and in difficulties because of their neglect of the Divine institutions, and they wept; but Nehemiah and those conducting the services under his direction sent word to the people not to weep, not to mourn, but on the contrary to rejoice and give thanks to God that they now were at last awake to the true state of affairs, that their troubles had come as a result of their disobedience, and that they had started in to reform and to have God's blessing in their endeavor, their effort to obey his statutes. There is a time to mourn, but it is when sin and opposition are prevailing; when repentance has come, when contrition for sin has led to reformation, it is time to cease mourning lest utter discouragement should result. They had met to thank God for returning favor, to realize that they had received chastisement at His hands, to thank Him for the same, to take good courage, to start afresh to walk in His way, and now were hearing His Law with a view to observing the same and thereafter having His blessing and favor. The message was, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, neither weep. Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry,

"FOR THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH"

Spiritual Israel can take an excellent lesson here: "Why should the children of the King go mourning all their days?" It was proper that we should mourn for sin, that we should realize the need for a Savior, that we should lay hold upon Him by faith; but once we have accepted the Lord and realized the forgiveness of our sins, the time for mourning is past, the time for joy and rejoicing is commenced. To so great an extent is this true that the Apostle exhorts that we should rejoice in everything, even in tribulation, realizing that since we have given

ourselves to the Lord and He has accepted us as His children and given us the anointing of His Spirit, adopted us into His family and made us heirs with Christ in the glorious promises to be fulfilled, our hearts should be so full of rejoicing that all the trials and difficulties of the way should seem as nothing.

Whoever can exercise the proper faith in the Lord and in His Word can rejoice; those who cannot exercise the faith cannot have the joy and rejoicing in this present time, but must wait for their portion by and by. The Lord is now seeking those who may firmly trust Him, come what may; He is Seeking those who will walk by faith, not by sight. Those who cannot walk by faith now will have the opportunity of walking by sight very shortly, when the Kingdom shall be established. They indeed shall have a goodly portion, but the portion which God has specially provided for the faithful is joint-heirship with His Son in the Kingdom. Let us, then, who have accepted the Lord and His Word, cast away everything of doubt and of fear, and live rejoicingly day by day while seeking to walk in the footsteps of Him who loved us and bought us with His precious blood. The joy of the Lord is our strength, the joy which God gives, the joy which comes from realizing that the Lord is our fortress, and that no ill can betide us without His knowledge, and that He has promised that all things shall work together for good to them that love Him--with all their heart, mind, soul and -strength.

This message that the leaders set forth, uttered from the main stand, was repeated to the people by the Levites in their midst. The tears were dry and the company dismissed to rejoice in the opening of a new year, which symbolized to them a fresh start in the ways of the Lord and in His favor. The reading of the Law on the second day (v.13) would seem to have been principally to the priests and Levites and heads of the various families--probably some of the special selections of the Law, appropriate to them as persons charged with certain responsibilities amongst the Lord's people. It was during this reading that it was discovered that for some time this feature of the Law had been entirely overlooked, namely,--

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

They found that in the Law it was commanded that at this season of the year, namely, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the seventh month, the Israelites should dwell for a week in booths constructed of branches of trees, and keep that week as a special festival of thanksgiving to the Lord. It was a feast of ingathering or harvest home. Our American Thanksgiving Day to some extent resembles this. They were to live for a week in these booths to remind them of how once they had been a people without a home, when God delivered them out of Egypt and brought them on the way to Canaan. The yearly remembrance of this experience would tend to produce in their hearts thankfulness to God as the one who had given them the land of promise, the one upon whom they were dependent for their national existence and freedom from slavery, and the one who had promised to bring them to a full inheritance of all the glorious things contained in the great promise, the Oath-Bound Covenant made to Abraham,--that ultimately through his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.

Our general three-day Conventions are somewhat after this Feast of Tabernacles pattern, only on a higher plane, adapted to us as spiritual Israelites. We do not live in tents and booths, yet our absence from our regular homes for a few days implies temporary dwelling-places or tabernacles. We are absent for a time from some of the conveniences and comforts of our homes, yet these conditions may be very favorable to us as reminders that here we have no continuing city, that we are not to set our hearts upon houses or lands or any earthly thing, but to remember that our citizenship is in heaven and that our present sojourn is toward the Heavenly Jerusalem, the

Kingdom, and that everything in the present time should be considered by us as a temporal or tabernacle condition, waiting for the eternal conditions which God has promised us.

OUR FEASTING IS SPIRITUAL

For the entire seven days the Jews rejoiced and had a feast of good fellowship one with another, dwelling in these booths. The whole people, for a time at least, were on a common level. The booths were erected inside the city or outside the walls as might be convenient, and many of them were on the roofs of the houses, which there are usually flat. It was not a feast of sensuality nor an occasion for moral abandon, but, quite to the contrary, it was a time for Bible study. The reading of the book of the Law and the expounding of it were the main centers of interest, and the people no longer wept and repined at the reading of it, but on the contrary, rejoicing that the Lord's favor was with them, they studied the Word with a view to practising it to the extent of their ability.

This also corresponds well with our Conventions, in which Bible study has the chief place and chief interest. Surely we do have spiritual refreshing, feasting; surely these gatherings, these spiritual feasts in temporary tabernacles away from our usual homes, are proving very helpful to the Lord's people. For this reason they grow more and more to be appreciated amongst those who put spiritual matters first. We live in a very busy day, when business, money-getting, is placed in the first rank by all civilized peoples. If worldly people can take vacations to engage in hunting and fishing and other so-called "sports," why cannot the Lord's people take their spiritual refreshment and recreation, and cultivate in their children more and more of the desire for the spiritual things? for these gatherings so far as possible should be family gatherings, and the pleasure of an outing and change of surroundings and rest from ordinary work should be combined with the highest pleasure of which we have knowledge, the pleasure of meeting with the Lord and with those who are His, the pleasure of studying the Divine Word and helping one another onward and upward in the heavenly way.

Our Golden Text should be the prayer of our hearts. It is important that we should know the statutes of Jehovah, that we search the Scriptures, that we have them well at our command, that we be able to give an answer to him that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us, and we need more than all this. We need to obey the Word, to practice it to the extent of our ability. True, we cannot come up to the demands of perfection, for God's law is perfect, but we can have the perfect attitude of heart, and nothing less than this will be acceptable to the Lord. We can show Him and to some extent show to others the endeavor of our lives in the direction of righteousness and all the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. If we had all knowledge and zeal and had not the spirit of obedience it would evidence a lack of the spirit of love, and prove us unworthy of the Divine favor and blessing promised to those who are rightly exercised by the Message from above.

BEREAN STUDIES IN THE REVELATION

STUDY CXXXVIII--AUGUST 20

SATAN, THE GREAT ARCH-ENEMY--REV. 20:1-3

(741) What suggestions have we in the Scriptures with respect to Satan's method of procedure in seeking influence and power in the earthly courts? H '21-6, 7.

(742) What does the binding of Satan imply; and, who will be affected by it? Will this be accomplished at once, or will it cover a period of time? H '21-7.

(743) What are the various titles applied to Satan in the Revelation? Cite texts where these titles are used and show how they apply. H '21-7.

(744) In the text we are now considering what is the meaning of the Dragon symbol? What is significant in the fact that Satan is never after this vision called the Dragon? H '21-7.

(745) To what does the title "Serpent of old" refer? Give the meaning of the words *Devil*, and *Satan*. H '21-7.

STUDY CXXXIX--AUGUST 27

THE BINDING OF SATAN--REV. 20:1-3

(746) Who or what is represented by the angel that accomplishes the binding of Satan? Give other Scriptures bearing upon this binding work. H '21-7, 8.

(747) What parable of our Lord assists in the interpretation of this symbol? Briefly explain the parable. H '21-8.

(748) From the light of this parable, at what period of time will the binding of Satan be accomplished? Will Satan know of this disaster beforehand? H '21-8.

(749) What is the "chain" that will be used in the binding process? Show how this will logically accomplish the work of binding Satan. H '21-8, 9.

(750) What is implied in the statement that Satan shall be bound for a thousand years "that he might deceive the nations no more," etc.? H '21-8, 9.