

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

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"BRIGHTER AND BRIGHTER UNTO THE PERFECT DAY"

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to pay you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth."-2 Pet. 1 : 12.

PERHAPS none knew better than St. Peter the meaning of his own language with regard to being established in the "present truth." His thought evidently was that of being grounded and fixed in the Truth that was then due the Church; and, of course, the inference is that there were truths then enjoyed by God's servants that it was not proper to reveal prior to that time; hence the term "present truth," as distinguished from whatever truths might have been possessed prior to that time.

Inasmuch as the followers of Christ have been admonished to continue to walk in the light and to continue to make progress in the pathway of truth, we observe in our study of the history of the Church's experience of the past nineteen centuries that the faithful have been kept, protected, and blessed with an increasing understanding of the Mine purposes, even though it has seemed at times that the surrounding powers of darkness would almost overwhelm the weak and insignificant vessels of light. The promise of the Master, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age," is seen today to have been verified.

PROGRESSED FROM FIRST CRUDE IDEAS

Now that we find it our happy privilege to be borne down the stream of time to the end of this Age, where we witness the closing scenes of this dispensation, we have seemed to see a new and deeper meaning in the promise of the Savior, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God," in view of the fact that a fuller revelation of the Divine Program is due to be made known to the Church, according to the promise given by the Master Himself, as well as by the mouth of His inspired representatives. (Luke 12: 37; 1 Thess. 5:4, 5, 6.) Therefore, the knowledge that has been committed to followers of Christ in modern times has become the occasion for them to make special application again of the language of the Apostle, "though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." The assembling together of the various fragments of truth, by which we have been enabled to see the harmonious whole of the Divine Plan, has constituted the Message for these days that has been most appropriately designated "present truth," as distinguished from the more or less hazy and beclouded, presentations of the Message of the darker past; and throughout the days of the Harvest of this Age, servants of God have realized it their privilege and mission to herald this further message concerning the Divine program, and call the attention of all truth-seekers to the fact that this is the Present Truth, or the

light for the last days, by which all the faithful might become so strengthened and fortified as to endure faithfully the remainder of their pilgrimage in the Narrow Way.

But the "perfect day" has not yet been reached in the final sense; and, as we find throughout the history of God's people, their pathway has been growing brighter with the rays of Truth; so faithful servants of the Lord continue to realize it their privilege to press on in the pathway that continues to shine by reason of time and events making manifestly more clear "the more sure word of prophecy" that was promised to continue to shine in a dark place until the day dawn. What more inspiring example of this gradual progress into the light could we possibly observe than that of Wm. Miller? At no point in his experience do we observe a disposition to recline in idleness or to conclude that there was nothing more to be known. How keen indeed has been the interest of the Lord's people in the history he has given us of the development of Present Truth! Referring to the earlier years of his study and progress, he explains

"But when, in 1822, I came to examine the subject of restitution from the standpoint of the ransom price given by our Lord Jesus for Adam, and consequently for all lost in Adam, it settled the matter of restitution completely, and gave me the fullest assurance that all must come forth from their graves and be brought to a clear knowledge of the Truth and to a full opportunity to gain everlasting life in Christ.

"Thus passed the years 1822-1822. The years following, to 1826, were years of continued growth in grace and knowledge on the part of the handful of Bible students with whom I met at Allegheny. We *progressed from our first crude and indefinite ideas* of restitution to clearer understanding of the details; but God's due time for the clear light had not yet come."

"THE MEEK WILL HE TEACH HIS WAY"

One of the most important considerations in making progress in the light is the maintaining of that attitude of heart, of readiness to see and accept of truth as fast as it becomes due. Such an attitude will require first of all fullness of consecration to God, and a large measure of the spirit of meekness and humility, that will enable the truth-seeker to set aside self-will and keep down personal prejudices and to be willing to receive the Lord's message from whatever instrument he may be pleased to use. Those who have been most largely used of the Lord in the past in assisting His people have been men of this stamp of character.

Whoever would make progress in the Truth- must be willing to set aside views and opinions previously held; for the effect of Truth is always to disclose tradition and error, thus making necessary the repudiation of lines of thought once loved and cherished. It is ever a matter then of the less clear and cruder understanding giving place to the clearer and saner conceptions.

Some of the brethren from time to time appear to have been somewhat alarmed, fearful that some of the investigations and expositions appearing in these columns bearing upon the "times and seasons," and the symbols of Revelation indicate to

some extent a departure from and a repudiation of what has been 'regarded as Present Truth. As we view the matter there has been no repudiation whatever of anything that has really been present truth, on the part of the brethren connected with this ministry. It is a fact, however, that many in the past have cherished as "Present Truth" certain impressions and interpretations, only to find in time that they were entertaining a mixture of truth and error. We have no hesitancy in acknowledging that we have been amongst the number who have found it necessary to discard certain views that were once thought to be correct. It is well known that Brother Russell likewise did the same. Throughout his writings the fact is obviously disclosed that in connection with a number of dates he had been impressed to look for certain developments and certain events to occur; and as a number of these dates passed without the realization of his expectations, it became necessary to discard what was manifestly erroneous. But nothing of what was really "Present Truth" was discarded; the Truth remains the same, and our Brother's faith and confidence in the Lord continued on to the end of his pilgrimage.

We are sure that Brother Russell had no thought that his death would mark the end of Truth's progress; for one to take such a position would be contrary to all that he ever taught on the subject. Brother Russell continually urged the Lord's people to press on over all obstacles in their search for the Truth and in order to make progress in the "path of light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Acting upon the advice given us throughout the Scriptures, the brethren associated in this ministry have felt that they should heed the Master's words, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch," etc., and "take heed unto the more sure word of prophecy as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn."

PRESENT TRUTH REMAINS THE SAME

Therefore, in pointing out as we have done in the pages of the HERALD certain lines of thought that indicate where we have been probably in error in the past, and noting certain logical deductions that would lead us to look toward the future for the fulfillment of our hopes and expectations, we are of necessity compelled to abandon certain ideas and conceptions to which we once held, just as all truth-seekers have had to do. But we trust that the substance of "Present Truth" remains the same; that so far from discarding any Truth it is our confidence that it is the privilege of the faithful today to possess a clearer vision of "Present Truth," including the times and seasons and the prophetic features than ever before. It is well for us to hold clear in mind just what is signified by being established in the "Present Truth." Brother Russell has beautifully summed up the matter in a few words

"To be established in the Truth dignifies that we have carefully studied and thoroughly proved it by 'the law and the testimony' (Isa. 8:20), and that as a consequence we are convinced of its verity, so that our faith is steadfast and immovable: we know whom we have believed; we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good; we have partaken of the sweets of fellowship with Him; we have

partaken of His spirit of meekness, faith, and godliness to such an extent as to be led into a joyful realization of the fullness of His grace as manifested in the wonderful Divine Plan of the Ages; and we have been permitted to see, not only the various features of that Plan, but also the necessity and reasonableness of all its various measures in order to the full accomplishment of its glorious outcome in the fullness of the appointed times. This is what it is to be 'established in the Present Truth.' It is indeed a most blessed condition, bringing with it such peace and joy as the world can neither give nor take away."-Z '02-307.

Surely we can gather from the foregoing expression that it was not Brother Russell's thought that the essential feature of "Present Truth" was merely that of believing in any particular day, or year as marking the time when this, that, or the other thing would happen; although we do properly include in the term "Present Truth" the thought of such knowledge of the times and seasons, of time prophecies, as we are permitted to understand in the light of developments and events of modern times. It is most evident that a knowledge of the exact day or year of the Second Advent of the Savior or the glorification of the saints, is not to be regarded as the all important thing; rather, the point of importance is that of recognizing the fact that the Master is present, *after He has come*, and to be able to read in the events of our day the fulfillment of ".the more sure word of prophecy."

"THE FACTS OF THE CASE"

Some years prior to the death of Brother Russell, in reviewing his deductions with regard to Gentile Times and what he expected to come to pass in 1914; he said

"If any be disposed to dispute the exactness of these figures we need have no quarrel, but simply say that any difference in the calculation must of necessity be but small-possibly *one year*, possibly *twenty years*-but in so long a period [as the 2520 years] how trifling would *be such a variation*.

"What we are specially interested in is the facts of *the case*, and what will occur when this long period terminates."-Z '11-238.

Who, in reading the foregoing lines, could fail to appreciate the thought of Brother Russell, namely that even though his calculations might be as much as twenty years out of the way, it would be such a *trifling matter* after all as to *make no difference*, because, as he said, "we are specially interested in the facts of the case." And what did he mean by "the facts of the case?" Surely he could mean nothing less than this: That at the conclusion of Gentle Times or thereabouts, the reign of sin and death would cease, the Kingdom of God would be established, the restitution of all things would commence, and the curse from the earth would be abolished. These are the facts he said we were all interested in, and a variation of one year or twenty years in our calculations should make no difference so far as our faith or the "facts" are concerned. Indeed, was not this the substance of one of his latest remarks, shortly before his death

"If in the Lord's providence the time should come twenty-five years later, then that would be our will. This would not change the fact that the Son of God was

sent by the Father, and that the Son is the Redeemer of our race; that He died for our sins; that He is selecting the Church for His Bride; and that the next thing now in order is the establishment of the glorious Kingdom at the hands of this great Mediator, who during His Mediatorial Reign will bless all the families of the earth. *These facts remain the wine.* The difference would be *merely that of a few wars in the time of the establishment of the Kingdom.*" -Z '14-4.

Here again we have very plainly stated brother Russell's thought that though the time might be twenty-five years later than what he had been expecting, this, he said, would not change "Present Truth"-the great facts in which we are all interested; for, he said, "the difference would be merely that of a few years in the time of the establishment of the Kingdom."

THE ESSENTIALS OF OUR FAITH

We have heretofore urged upon the brethren that any difference of opinion that there might be amongst us with regard to the particular days or years for things to happen should not be allowed to hinder or disturb the fellowship of the saints. The grounds of our fellowship are not along those lines, and in fact, the kernel of our Message does not imply that we shall announce to others any particular day or year; nor should we permit our own personal views with regard to the matter of dates to be tests upon one another to any extent or degree. The brethren here have made no tests of them and we urge that others do not.

Brother Russell stated the grounds of our fellowship as follows

"This, then, proves that the kernel of the Gospel is not the Jewish law, nor certain scientific theories and abstruse problems; but the simple teachings which our Lord delivered to the Apostles. What were these?

"1. He taught that all men were sinners.

"2. That He came into the world to 'give His life a ransom' -- a corresponding price for the sins of the whole world.

"3. That no man could come unto the Father, but by Him.

"4. That all who would come by Him must, in addition to the exercise of faith in Him, also take up his cross and follow him.

"5. That all believers are one with Him, as the branches of a grapevine are parts of the vine.

"6. That every branch to abide in Him must bring forth fruit, else it will be taken away.

"7. That those who trust in Him are to hope for and to expect His Second Coming-'I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.'

"8. That the ultimate end of our hope for all promised blessings is in and through a resurrection of the dead.

"9. That love is the law -- of the New Covenant -- `Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'

"We are fully authorized, therefore, to teach and to believe that these are the points of faith and practice which are necessary to both Jews and Gentiles who shall be favored with the call of this Gospel Age; and that nothing else is necessary or pertinent to the `doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ' or `the faith once delivered to the saints.' Whoever makes tests greater or less than these is in error."-Z '98-176.

"BUT IF YE BITE AND DEVOUR"

Whether or not we shall be given to see eye to eye with regard to the particular year of the end of all things and the time of our glorification-let this matter not; let us press forward in the development of the Christ character, in the development of the spirit of patience, meekness, long-suffering, brotherly kindness and love. And in this connection we cannot but have before us the solemn warning of the great Apostle Paul, applicable to Christians of all times-to beware of and to put away the works of the flesh, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Now the works of the flesh are manifest ... hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies ... of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past that, they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." -- Eph. 4:22, 31; Gal. 5:15,19-23.

Surely the Apostle's language is so plain that the simplest follower of the Lamb must recognize its spirit and its import -that the image of the Master set before us as our ideal signifies that we must develop very largely of the love of Christ` in our hearts; that all disposition to speak evil of and to slander our brethren is positively forbidden; that all disposition toward malice, anger, hatred, and strife must be overcome in order that we may be accounted worthy to share in the First Resurrection of the Blessed and the Holy. So it is in view of this fact that the Apostle earnestly admonishes the Church to be firm and steadfast in the "Present Truth," saying: "for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."-2 Pet. 1:10,11.

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET OF COURAGE

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith., quit you like men, be strong."-1 Cor. 16:13; Jer. 35:5-14, 18, 19.

JEREMIAH began to exercise his office as prophet in the days when God's typical kingdom was rapidly declining. He prophesied in the days of Josiah and of his four successors, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah. Being called early in his career to testify for God against great wickedness amongst His people, Jeremiah timidly shrank from responding to the call saying, "All, Lord God, I cannot, speak: for I am a child." The Lord bade him to fear not, for He would be with him; and He touched the young man's mouth and gave him an eloquence such as the world has rarely known.

From the commentator, Peloubet, we have some profitable suggestions

"Jeremiah's prophetic activities extended from the last years of Josiah's reign to and beyond the final capture of Jerusalem and the exile of the people. He was constantly opposed. Even under Josiah the men of Anathoth sought to kill him and he was continually reproached and derided because he foretold disaster. Jeremiah is called 'the weeping prophet,' but he had good reason to weep, for he saw his beloved city and nation hastening to ruin.

"During the reign of Jehoiakim the position of Jeremiah became increasingly difficult. He was opposed sharply to the royal policies, to the king's self-glorification, his oppression of the people, his neglect of the worship of Jehovah. Jeremiah exasperated the priests and the false prophets by his insistence upon true religion. They charged him before the court with disloyalty, but they could not obtain a conviction.

"Jeremiah opposed the alliance with Egypt which was so popular, insisting that Babylon was sure to triumph and that it was folly to withstand her. This insistence brought Jeremiah into disrepute, and seems even to have caused his imprisonment for a time."

Thus Jeremiah was what would be esteemed a prophet of ,evil-a pessimist. It is not surprising, therefore, that in his obedience to the Lord in his faithfulness in speaking forth the Word of the Lord, he became greatly disesteemed . of his fellow countrymen, who doubtless would have honored him highly, had he prophesied unto them smooth things, promises of coming blessings and greatness as a nation. Thus we see that Jeremiah had not only the opposition of the idolatrously disposed people of the kingdom, but the disfavor also of the reformers of his day, who thought indeed that they were doing a grand work, and should be complimented thereon, and should have messages of Divine favor.

The Lord's messages, at the mouth of Jeremiah, practically held out no hope for a permanent return of Divine favor in the wear future; but on the contrary predicted that Judah would be carried away captive as Israel (the ten tribes), her sister, had been. And as though emphasizing this thought, the Lord declared to Jeremiah, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet My mind could not be [changed] toward this people: cast them out of My sight." -- Jer. 15:1-7.

Jehoiakim was upon the throne and proved to be a thoroughly bold and bad man. Under his guidance of the kingdom, evil of every kind seemed to prosper and the good reforms instituted by his father Josiah, gave way to fresh idolatry. As a

result of his faithful denunciation of evil and his prediction of coming calamity and punishment, Jeremiah's liberty had been restrained and he had been hindered for some time from prophesying publicly, but under the Lord's guidance he wrote out his prophecy respecting the coming judgments and chastisements upon the people of Judea, his scribe being Baruch. When it was finished, it was read before certain prominent people of Jerusalem, and so deeply impressed them that they desired that the matter should be brought to the king's attention. Apparently they were friendly to the Prophet and the scribe, and suggested the necessity for their concealment, lest the king should be angry with the prophecy and should seek to do them injury. King Jehoiakim, not satisfied with the general report given him respecting Jeremiah's prophecy, demanded to see the document itself, and had his own scribe read it before him. The king was unmoved by the message, and after hearing the contents of three of the columns of the manuscript, he took his scribe's penknife and cut them off and cast them into the fire before him, and so he continued to do with the remainder until the entire manuscript was read and destroyed. Thus he emphasized his determination to take no counsel from the Lord, or we might say that he evidenced his lack of faith in the Lord and his disregard for His Word.

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

The king ordered the arrest of Jeremiah and his scribe, but, in harmony with the Lord's providences, they had already secreted themselves and were not found. In their seclusion they learned of the destruction of the manuscript, and prepared another statement of the prophecy, which we are informed had certain further additions, and this constitutes the book of Jeremiah as found in our Bibles. This gives us a little view of the manner in which the Bible came into existence piece by piece under the Lord's supervision. Doubtless the first manuscript delivered to the king was more particularly in respect to his own time and affairs. This served its purpose, and then the larger and fuller book of Jeremiah's prophecy, as we now have it, was prepared—not especially for the people of that time, but, as the Apostle Peter points out, it was designed for the instruction and edification of the Gospel Church (Rom. 15:4; 1 Pet. 1:12.) Even those things which were applicable in some measure to Jeremiah's day and to Jehoiakim and the king of Babylon were, as we have seen, of two-fold significance -- applying not only to the literal Babylon of that time but also to the mystic Babylon of this Gospel Age.

The Lord declares, "My Word that goeth forth out of My mouth shall not return unto Me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." (Isa. 55: 11.) We see this not only in the narrative foregoing -- that the Lord's plans were not frustrated by the king—but we see it also in all the various steps of the Lord's providences in connection with the giving to us of His Word. Much of that Word, for centuries has seemed dark and meaningless to the Lord's people, but in the light of the Millennial dawn it is becoming luminous. Not that we should consider that every little item and detail of the prophecies of old would contain great value and great instruction, for this we do not find. Our understanding is that the pearls of truth are scattered throughout the Word, here a little and there a little, and that in this manner our

Lord has hidden the beauties of His plan from the casual reader, while His Spirit draws the attention of the New Creation to these pearls of thought so valuable to us in our spiritual upbuilding, in giving us knowledge of the Divine Plan. It is with this as with everything in nature: diamonds are not found in a heap together, but scattered here and there in the peculiar soil in which they are secreted. . Gold is not found in large blocks, but usually in very minute grains intermingled with tons of sand and dirt and rocks. In the wheat .field there is a much larger bulk of straw and of chaff than of clean grain.

THE REMOVAL OF THE DIADEM

The captivity of the Jews was in three sections the first included Daniel and others with the king, Jehoiakim. The latter was left in charge over the Jews as a vassal king for about eight years. Following his ignominious death, his son, Jehoiachin, was placed on the throne, on the same footing as his father-that is, to be subservient to the king of Babylon. He reigned for only three months, when, because of his rebellion against the king of Babylon, the second captivity took place, and he was carried away. In fact; this was by far the largest of the, captivities. The king of Babylon then placed Zedekiah in control as his vassal under tribute, but on account of the latter's treachery and league with Egypt, nine years later, the Babylonian army came again against Jerusalem and besieged it. Thus the third and final captivity, famine and pestilence, resulted, and about two years later, the city of Jerusalem was captured and utterly destroyed, and King Zedekiah, with his eyes put out, was taken a prisoner to Babylon, with all the people except a few of the very poorest and least competent. Jeremiah, given his liberty, chose to remain with the poor of the land who subsequently, went down into Egypt, so that Jerusalem and the country round about lay desolate, much of the time without inhabitants, for seventy years.

Jeremiah had prophesied this ultimate success of the enemy, under Nebuchadnezzar, and had recommended the Israelites to surrender speedily and save themselves from the great trouble, famine, etc, which otherwise would surely come upon them. He pointed out that their troubles were the result of disobedience to God, and that the proper course now was to repent and accept the situation and learn the lesson and profit thereby.

Certain princes of the kingdom soon learned of the prophesying and appealed to the king that it must be stopped, as it had a demoralizing effect upon the defenders in proportion as the prophecy was believed. They requested the death of Jeremiah, and the king responded that the matter should -be in their hands. But perhaps fearful of the consequences of the act, or perhaps deterred by the Lord's providence, instead of putting Jeremiah to death they put him into a dungeon, which was probably a water cistern. Its bottom was foul with accumulated mud, and the Prophet sank into this and would soon have perished of hunger had it not been for the interposition of a colored man, an Ethiopian eunuch, one of the king's servants, who appealed to the king against the injustice and was commissioned to take Jeremiah out from the dungeon or cistern by means of cords, his tender-

heartedness and care for the Prophet being indicated also by his supplying cast-off rags to keep the ropes from cutting the Prophet's body.

Jeremiah lived to see the fulfillment of his prophecy -- the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and their captivity to the kingdom of Babylon. Jeremiah's experiences illustrated a general principle, namely, that where the will of God and the plans of man conflict, those who are faithful to God are likely to be in the minority and to be considered public enemies, because out of accord with those who are out of harmony with the Lord and His Plan. It was this that brought upon Jeremiah his imprisonment as it has brought upon the Lord's people of every age the frowns and opposition and persecution of those who are not the Lord's faithful people, of those who are not guided by the Divine counsel, but are walking in their own ways under the leadership -of the prince of this world.

"IN IGNORANCE YE DID IT"

Since .Satan is still the prince of this world, it is reasonable to suppose that those who are in accord with him today will be found similarly opposed to God, opposed to all who are loyal to the teachings of His Word. It is for this reason that the Scriptures assure us that we must expect to suffer now, to be misunderstood, misrepresented-"Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world the world would love its own, but ye are not of the world, for I have chosen you out of the 'world.'"

Looking back all through the Gospel Age, from the days of Jesus until now, we find that those who have been loyal and faithful to Him in every time have been called upon to prove; to witness, to testify to their faithfulness to the Lord by the trials and difficulties which they would endure for His sake. And this expression, "for His sake," means much the same today as it did in the day of Jeremiah, namely for the sake of the Word of the Lord. It was because Jeremiah was faithful to the Lord's Message and the others unfaithful to it that they persecuted him. And this is still the case: the Word of the Lord is His representative in the world still. Our Lord places Himself and His Word side by side when He said, "He who is ashamed of Me and My Word, of him will I also be ashamed."

The test is upon us today as it has been upon the Lord's people in the past. Are we ashamed of Him, of His Message? All who are of the overcoming class,, and Priests unto God," all who will be associated with Jesus as overcomers of the world and His joint-heirs in the Kingdom will have these characteristics. They will be loyal to the Message, not ashamed of it. The words of the Apostle will voice their sentiments, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

Not being ashamed of the Lord and His Message implies that they will be faithful in the presentation of the same when convenient to themselves or when inconvenient. To the best of their knowledge and ability they will speak forth' the words of truth and soberness-as wisely as possible, as inoffensively as possible, but they must speak. As the Apostle said, when forbidden to declare the Good Tidings, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20.) But it is only those who have heard something and seen something who have any

testimony to give; those who know nothing may as well keep quiet. Until by the Lord's grace the eyes of our understanding .are opened, until we shall have seen something of His grace exhibited in His Divine Plan, we are not prepared; not qualified to tell others. We must first receive the living bread before we can dispense it; we must first know the Truth and be set . free by it before we can become its bond servants, before it could be true. of us as it was of the Apostle "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel of Christ." That is to say, he would be unhappy if not permitted to tell the glorious Message of God's redeeming love and mercy exhibited in His Divine Plan.

As the poet has declared, "We know not what awaits us." That is, we know not with distinctness what to expect. In a general way we are informed by the Lord's Word that a great time of trouble is impending. It is not our duty to make this our central theme. Rather the Good Tidings of great joy which shall be of Christ, is our central theme; and in connection with this is the proclamation of the terms and conditions upon which we hope to be accepted of the Father as joint-heirs with Christ-members of His Body.

THE SHEPHERD'S CARE

THE TABLE OF HIS PROVIDING

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."-Psa. 23: 5.

AMONG those who have sought to discover and unfold ,the practical significance of this wonderful shepherd Psalm, this "rarest gem in the song treasury of the world," the thought seems to be quite general that the Psalmist at this point changes the figure from that of the experiences of the shepherd and his sheep to that of a banquet table. One who has given much careful study to this Psalm, and who has brought forth from it many wonderful, practical, and comforting thoughts that have been greatly blessed to the Lord's sheep, interprets it this way, and has expressed this general thought, as follows: "At first it seems difficult to catch the exact sequence of the Psalmist's thought, as he turns from the sheep-cotes to the festal board."

But, is it necessary, we ask, to understand that the Psalmist at this point changes the figure? We are inclined to think not. One who was familiar with every circumstance and condition connected with the varied experiences of the Syrian shepherd and his sheep, and who is therefore good authority on this point, has said that it is in the words, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies," that the grand climax of completeness in the shepherd's care of his sheep is reached: "Ah, to think that the shepherd's highest skill and heroism should be lost from view as the Psalm begins to sing of it, and only an indoor banquet thought of!" As we come to learn more fully concerning the tender, watchful care of the Syrian shepherd in providing sustenance for his sheep, and in protecting them from their enemies while they are feeding in the *prepared* pasture, we believe that it will be seen that this Syrian writer has the true, the

correct thought, that this most helpful and comforting Psalm continues to its very end to describe the experiences of a shepherd and his sheep; and it is only when considered from this viewpoint that we are enabled to draw from it the most comforting and helpful lessons. In other words, while it is true that the great central truths designed to be taught in the use of this figure is that of the Great Shepherd's provision for the feeding and protecting of His sheep, it is not necessary to understand that the Psalmist's thought at this point in the beautiful song turns from the sheep-cotes to the festal board or the indoor banquet. Perhaps that which has caused so many to think that the beautiful figure of shepherd life has been changed to that of a banquet hall or festal board is that the Psalmist makes use of the word *table* -- "*Thou preparest a table.*" Concerning this, it will be seen by all, we believe, that the word *table* is here used figuratively, as also in other of the Psalms. Referring to the unbelief of the children of Israel in the wilderness concerning God's promise to provide for them, the Psalmist expresses their lack of faith by putting into their mouths the words: "Can God prepare a *table* in the wilderness?" The word *table* as thus used means simply something "spread out." We are told that in those olden times, the table in the Syrian country was often the same as that which may be seen today among the Arabs -- only a piece of skin or a mat, or cloth spread on the ground. The Psalmist in another place says, "Let their table become a snare before them ; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." (Psa. 69:22.) The Psalmist in making use of this figure was thinking simply of meals spread on the ground in the open country.

"IN THE PRESENCE OF ENEMIES"

As the Syrian writer has said: "This is the kind of a table that would be thought of in shepherd life. Why not so in a shepherd song? Now is not that exactly what the shepherd prepares for his sheep? Along with finding water, he has the daily task of searching out a good and safe feeding place. He *prepares* a table before them' in truth, and it is none the less a table-in his eyes because it is a spreading slope of ground.

"All the shepherd's skill and often heroic work are called forth in this duty, for it is done many a day 'in the presence of the sheep's enemies.' There are many poisonous plants in the grass and the shepherd must find and avoid them. The sheep will not eat certain poisonous things, but there are some which they will eat, one kind of poisonous grass in particular." This Syrian writer cites an instance in which his relative once lost three hundred sheep because of a mistake of this kind made in performing the difficult task of selecting or preparing feeding ground for them. He also describes other difficult tasks that entered into the life of a shepherd in connection with preparing pasture for his sheep, and defending and protecting them from their many enemies

"Then there are snake holes in some kinds of ground, and, if the snakes be not driven away, they bite the noses of the sheep. For this the shepherd sometimes burns the fat of hogs along the ground. Sometimes he finds ground where moles have worked their holes just under the surface. Snakes lie in these holes with their

heads sticking up ready to bite the grazing sheep. The shepherd knows how to drive them away as he goes along ahead of his sheep.

"And around the feeding-ground which the shepherd *prepares*, in holes and caves in the hillsides, there may be jackals, wolves, hyenas, and panthers too, and the bravery and skill of the shepherd are at the highest point in closing *up* these dens with stones or slaying the wild beasts with his long bladed knife. Of nothing do you hear shepherds boasting more proudly than of their achievements in this part of their care of the sheep."

When we come to see that this was one of the most important duties of a shepherd in caring for his sheep, it seems clear that the Psalmist of Israel continues to use the figure of shepherd life when he gives utterance to the words: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

THE SAINTS ARE HIS PECULIAR CARE

How true it is of the Great Shepherd that He not only provides the food for His trusting ones, but sees to it that no poisonous elements shall get into it, or if by chance there should, he sees to it that they are not injured thereby: "Surely" says the Psalmist, "He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence." (Psa. 91:3.) He will guard His sheep from the pestilence of false doctrines. "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" are our Lord's words. (Matt. 24:24.) Never was there a time like the present when these warning words of the Savior are so applicable. Thousands are falling away from the faith of the Gospel; but from all these doctrinal pestilences, the Lord's trusting sheep shall be protected. The Good Shepherd has spread a table for His trusting sheep in this present time . in the very presence of enemies-a table of precious truth, that will keep them from falling into the destroying errors peculiar to our day. Evolution theories, Higher Criticism, Spiritism, and Christian Science, are causing many who it was thought were strong in the faith, to fall away. Even among those who were conversant with this special, spread table of truth, very many are being confused or led away by cunning sophistries, and fanciful interpretations of so-called types. How is this! we ask. There can be but one answer: those who are being led astray, those who are being confused or destroyed by the enemies of the sheep, have failed to listen or to give heed to the voice of the Great Shepherd, who has said, "fly sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him." (John 10:27,5.) The Good Shepherd has always cared for His trusting sheep.. Those who are familiar with the eventful history of the Lord's true sheep are well aware of the many snares that the wily Adversary has laid to entrap them. The Apostle warned against these when he said, "After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember," etc. Again as we read the history of the Dark Ages, described by the beloved John in the Apocalypse, when all that dwelt upon the earth, except those whose names were written in the book of life of the

Lamb, were deceived, and bowed down and worshiped at the altars of a false, a counterfeit Christianity, we cannot help inquiring, How was it that there were any who were not deceived? The Psalmist answers this query: "Thou preparest for me a table in the presence of mine enemies."

THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL

But one will inquire, How can we apply the words of the Psalmist, "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over," to the shepherd life? Before replying to this question we notice that those who, in the previous expression, change the figure from shepherd life to that of a banquet hall or festal board, when they come to the words, "Thou anointest my head with oil," are obliged to change the figure again. These words are applied to the anointing of the antitypical priesthood, the Church, with the Holy Spirit, which, of course, can have no reference to a banquet hall. Again, when explaining the figure "My cup runneth over," the figure has to be changed again. It is true that the word cup is used in the Scriptures to represent sweet or bitter experiences, sometimes both. One who explains it this way has said: "The intimation is that the Lord's cup signifies bitter experiences and trials in the present time, as Jesus said, 'The cup which My Father hath poured for Me, shall I not drink it?' And this was the cup-His cup-which He offered to His disciples, and which we, becoming His disciples, propose to share with Him, and which is symbolically represented in the communion cup. (1 Cor. 10:15-17.) It is sweet and precious, in many senses of the word, to be privileged to participate in any sacrifices or services for the Lord and His cause. The sweet mingles freely with the bitter. But the Lord promises that in the future, the cup of new wine in the kingdom shall more than compensate for any bitterness of the present time. Our cup is full, but we would not wish it one drop less."

While all of this is true, and is taught in many statements of Scripture, it is not necessary to apply these figures of the shepherd life to these experiences, which to be sure, are very important matters connected with the lives of the consecrated. But where, one may say, can we find these figures in the shepherd life? It is at this point that we have a beautiful picture of what begins to take place at the end of a shepherd's day of toil. "The Psalm has sung of the whole round of the day's wandering-all the needs of the sheep, all the care of the shepherd. Now it closes with the last scene of the day. At the door of the sheepfold the shepherd stands and the rodding of the sheep takes place. The shepherd turns his body to let the sheep pass; he is the, door, as Christ said of Himself. With the rod he holds back the sheep while he looks them over one by one as they go into the fold. He has the horn filled with olive-oil and he has cedar-tar, and he anoints a knee bruised on the rocks, or a side scratched by thorns. And here comes one that is not bruised but is simply worn and exhausted; he bathes its face and head with the refreshing olive-oil, and he takes the large two-handled cup and dips it brimming full from the water he has brought for that purpose, and he lets the weary sheep drink. There is nothing finer in the Psalm than this. God's care is not for the wounded only; it is for-those who are just worn and weary."

"I WILL SEEK OUT MY SHEEP"

How comforting in this connection are the words of Jehovah recorded in the book of Ezekiel, which, while having special reference to fleshly Israel in the near future, may properly be applied to spiritual Israel of the Gospel Age. The words are addressed to the false shepherds who have led astray the Lord's sheep.

"Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord God; behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day ... I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment." -- Ezek. 34:9-16.

How comforting it is for the Lord's people to know that the Good Shepherd not only cares for the needs of His sheep collectively, but that He does not by any means overlook the various special needs of each individual! How much more comforting, however, it is to draw closer to the Great Shepherd and say to Him "Thou preparest for me a table in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." It is only the obedient, the trustful ones, that realize experimentally the tender, loving sympathy and care of the Great Shepherd in the many trying experiences encountered in the narrow and difficult pathway that leads to the heavenly Home beyond. How blessed, how precious it is to know that He cares for the needs of the tired, the weary, the wounded ones of the flock. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." -- Isa. 40:11.

NEHEMIAH, THE BOLD BUILDER

"Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord."-Neh..4:6-15.

NEHEMIAH signifies "Comforted of Jehovah" or "Jehovah consoles". Concerning his father, Hachaliah, nothing is recorded except that so noble a son as Nehemiah argues -favorably for a good father and mother.

"From the fact that Nehemiah was so grieved at the desolation of the city and sepulchers of his fathers and that he was so jealous for the laws of the God of Judah, we can justly infer that he was brought up by pious parents who instructed him in the history and law of the Jewish people."

Nehemiah's position as cupbearer to Artaxerxes king of Persia implies that he was a man of fine character and ability, for it was his duty to serve wine at the king's table. "On account of the constant fear of plots and intrigues, a person must be regarded as thoroughly trustworthy to hold this position. He must guard against poison in the king's cup, and was sometimes required to swallow some of the wine before serving it. His confidential relations with the king often endeared him to his sovereign and also gave him a position of great influence. Nehemiah's financial ability (Neh. 5:8, 10, 14, 17) would indicate that the office was a lucrative one."-*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Thirteen years after Ezra's company returned to Jerusalem, Nehemiah went thither with an escort and full authority from the king of Persia to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and to restore its gates. It would appear that Ezra's reformation, while very helpful to the people, brought against them the violent opposition of their neighbors, as was to have been expected. The Jews, now considerable in numbers, were despised by their neighbors who wished to drive them out of the land. The wall of the city was poor and did not withstand the attack.

Josephus says that Nehemiah, wealthy and favored of the king of Persia, resided in the king's palace at Shushan. He was a pious man and deeply interested in the land of his fathers. While walking one day he overheard two men talking in the Hebrew tongue, and accosted them. They had been to Jerusalem and had returned. One of them proved to be his own relative. He gladly inquired respecting the holy land, the holy city, God's Temple, and concerning the Jews who had returned from Babylon. The sad story of their trials and the desolation of the city and its exposure to enemies touched his heart and led him to prayer. That prayer is the subject of this lesson.

ANSWERING OUR OWN PRAYERS

Undoubtedly, the recorded prayer of Nehemiah is merely an epitomized statement, for we read that he made the matter a subject of earnest prayer for four months before he reached the point of action where God used him in the fulfillment of his own petition. This reminds us of how our Lord instructed His disciples, saying, "Pray ye the Lord of the Harvest that He would send forth more laborers into His Harvest." While the disciples thus prayed it would imply that they would be laboring in accordance with their prayers, that they would be doing all in their own power to forward the Harvest work as well as to interest other laborers in the same. Thus it must always be that earnest effort will accompany prayer. Prayers not accompanied by efforts brand themselves as insincere. The prayer which is not of faith is sin-unscriptural, sacrilegious.

The poet has well defined prayer as being "The soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." Another has well declared that it "'is the Christian's vital breath" - that is to say, Christian character cannot be maintained without prayer any more than a human life could be maintained without breathing. Who has not noticed that all the great Bible characters used of the Almighty were accustomed to go to Him regularly in prayer and to seek for guidance from Him in respect to every matter. Even the great Redeemer, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from

sinner, needed to pray to the Father -- needed His fellowship and communion -- needed to be in touch with the Infinite One. Several of His prayers are recorded and we are told that He spent the entire night in prayer on more than one occasion.

Some may ask, Would the Almighty change His plans in answer to our petitions? Assuredly He would not. Indeed, on the contrary, we are cautioned in the Scriptures to ask only according to His will. We are warned that if we ask amiss our petitions will not be answered. Hence the necessity for studying God's Word and being enlightened thereby respecting the Divine program that we may ask in harmony with every feature of it and receive strength and encouragement through the answer to our petitions.

The Redeemer gave us the keynote to this, saying, "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.) Alas! how few seem to note the two limitations of this promise

1. The; one asking must be in Christ-abiding in Him. This means that the petitioner has turned from sin, has accepted Christ and the terms of discipleship. It implies that he has made a full consecration of his life to the Lord and become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Such, abiding in Christ, may pray to the Father.
2. After having come into membership and fellowship with the Head, the Messiah, these must ask in harmony with God's Word and promises; in order to know what things to ask for they must search the Scriptures, which are sufficient, "that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished." There are many things for which we may pray, the answer to which would not involve any change in the Divine plans. We are not to understand that all the little incidents of life are foreordained and predestinated. So far as the world is concerned, many of its affairs are purely of chance under the permission of natural laws with which God does not generally interfere. It is in the affairs of His consecrated people that God assures us He takes a special interest. These are so supervised by His providence that He guarantees His children that all things shall work together for good to them.

WHAT TO PRAY FOR

God is pleased to make use of the little talents possessed by His consecrated people, and their usefulness as ambassadors for God and for Christ, in their own families and own cities, will avail in proportion to and depend very much upon the earnestness of their prayers and endeavors. Those who pray for opportunities to serve the Lord and His cause and who watch for the fulfillment of their prayers in the open doors of opportunity will surely have them. "He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

The baptized in Christ may pray for earthly necessities, as in the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread"; but we are not to pray for more than the bread and water which the Lord has authorized His people to pray, for. The true Christian, instead of thinking about what he shall eat, what he shall drink, and

wherewithal he shall be clothed-instead of making earthly things the subject of his prayers, will be thinking of and praying about his higher, his heavenly interests. More particularly he will be concerned respecting his spiritual food, spiritual clothing, spiritual growth in grace and knowledge and love, and for these particularly he will pray and strive.

Our Lord declares, "After all these things (food and clothing) do the Gentiles seek; but seek ye first '(chiefly) the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." God's people are consequently to attain a joint-heirship in Messiah's great Kingdom according to the Divine invitation that we should be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord." We are to seek possessions in that Kingdom with our Lord in His throne, by seeking to develop characters which will have Divine approval and make us fit for that high exaltation. Our Lord speaks of these as seeking the righteousness of the Kingdom -- that Kingdom which will be established amongst mankind for the very purpose of enforcing righteousness; and whoever will be a join-their with Christ must love righteousness and hate iniquity, and must develop this character before he dies in order to hope for a share in this Kingdom and its glory, honor, and immortality. For this he will be seeking, striving, praying -- above all else.

Nehemiah's prayer for Jerusalem and the holy interests centered there continued for months before the answer suddenly came. The king, whom he served as confidential secretary, prepared a banquet, the queen being present as well as Nehemiah and others. Everybody was smiling and joyous, attired in their silks and jewels, but the king noticed that his trusted secretary had a sadness which showed through his smiles. Finding that he was not ill, he said that it must be a trouble of heart and inquired as to what it was. It was a dangerous moment for Nehemiah, for the kings of that time were quite autocratic and capricious. The sadness might have been construed to mean a loss of interest in the king and his affairs, or a hundred things disapproved for such an occasion of rejoicing.

Nehemiah's prayer instantly went up to God for wisdom to know how to answer, for he did not receive the wisdom at once, although he had prayed beforehand. He knew that the Almighty could hear his desires of heart, uttered or unexpressed. He received the needed wisdom for a wise and successful reply, which did not offend the king, but enlisted his interest. He told the king that his sadness of heart was because the home of his fathers was ruined. The result was that the king appointed him special governor of Judea with full authority to attend to the work and to call upon the governors of surrounding provinces for aid if necessary.

WISDOM SHOWN BY METHODS EMPLOYED

That Nehemiah was a wise man and no mere dreamer was evidenced in the practical methods he employed. A man of wealth, he probably financed his own expedition, aside from the retinue of soldiers, etc., furnished by the king. A four-months' journey brought them to Jerusalem. The object of his coming was kept secret. He was merely a visitor for a few days, seeing -and hearing. Then by night he made an inspection of the old city walls, particularly the broken parts and the heaps of ruins from which they might be rebuilt. He saw the feasibility of the

scheme prominent representatives of the people, explained to them his object in coming, showed them his authority from the king, and suggested a method for the beginning of the repair work immediately.

He perceived the necessity for great caution, as enemies were on every hand as anxious to hinder them as he was anxious for success. The Samaritans were jealous. They had a rival worship of Jehovah, and Israel's success would seem to imply that God's favor was to the Jews rather than toward the Samaritans. Besides, they all hoped to profit by the poverty and helplessness of the Jews-thinking it riot wrong to pillage them as opportunity offered. Nehemiah's plan was approved. The leading men in each quarter of the city joined in the work with the laborers, and each built the wall most nearly in front of his own home quarters. This was a wise-plan, for each would be specially interested in having the wall strong in his own neighborhood, and a certain degree of proper pride would attach to the work as a prominent monument of the builder's skill-itself a credit or discredit.

Nehemiah joined in the work with the others, his accompanying servants participating also. His spirit of zeal was an inspiration to the discouraged people, who took heart, and hope began to thrive. Then came discouragement and opposition from the enemies. An attack was even planned, but learning of this, Nehemiah so directed the work that the heads of the families kept an armed watch while the others labored, carrying swords also for self-defense.

When their enemies found that they were prepared, the proposed attack was abandoned and discouragements were resorted to. The effort was laughed at, ridiculed as impossible, and worthless anyhow: Those unused to manual toil soon grew sore and weary and discouraged. The higher the walls grew, the more difficult it was to place the stones and the mortar, and the more stones built into the wall, the fewer suitable ones remained amongst the rubbish. It was a time of testing of faith and loyalty to God. Trials and difficulties are permitted to come to all of God's people for just such testings. The overcomers are developed through various experiences for the Divine service.

"STAND FAST IN THE FAITH"

It may be asked why Nehemiah's faithfulness and courage were tested, and what reward was his. We reply that a reward of character-development follows every good endeavor. The reward of those who lived faithfully in Nehemiah's time differs essentially from the reward.-of the faithful amongst the followers of Jesus. The latter are promised a share with the Master in His glorious Messianic Kingdom. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"; "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne."- Luke 12:32 ; Rev. 3:21.

But Nehemiah could have no share in these Kingdom promises because he lived before the call to the Kingdom-before Pentecost. He and others of his time who displayed faithfulness and loyalty are not personally mentioned by St. Paul in Hebrews 11, but they are undoubtedly included in the list. Of them the Apostle

declared, "They had this testimony, that they pleased God." St. Paul declares that they will receive their reward-a share in the earthly phase of the Kingdom, after the Church shall first have her share with the Redeemer in the heavenly phase of the Kingdom, for "they, without us, shall not be made perfect, God having some better thing for us."

DANIEL THE BELOVED OF JEHOVAH

SERIES III

THE KINGDOM OF THE STONE

ONE of the most important features of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and that which doubtless more than anything else startled the king, was the mysterious stone, which, in its sudden and quick descent crushed the image to powder. In explaining the meaning of this to the king,

Daniel said "In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another -people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." -- Dan. 2: 44--R. V.

As the kingdoms symbolized by the feet and toes of the image are still ruling, the smiting by the stone has not yet taken place. This part of the vision is yet future. And as there are different views held by expositors concerning what is to follow this present order of things, it is not to be wondered at that there would be differing interpretations given in respect to the smiting of the stone. One class of expositors has explained this transaction as referring to a final judgment Day, when the earth will be destroyed and utterly depopulated. These same expositors have explained the stone becoming a mountain and filling the whole earth, as representing the return of the resurrected saints of all ages to the -earth, after its destruction and renewal. This view cannot be the right one, as it discards altogether the one-thousand year reign of Christ and His glorified saints over the .nations, and puts the *final* executive judgment at the close of *this* Age, instead of as is indicated in Rev. 20, at the. close of the *next* Age. It should be kept in mind that the verse above quoted is all the explanation that is given of the stone by the inspired Daniel. And it is certain that there is 'not a thing in this inspired explanation which would cause us (unless biased by such a view as referred to above) to get the impression that the setting up of this kingdom would result in the destruction and utter depopulation of the earth. To illustrate: if the statement were made that a war between France and Germany would result in the utter destruction or consumption of Germany as a republic, and the establishment of French authority over the German territory, we would not understand that statement to mean that all the inhabitants of Germany and her colonies would be annihilated or killed. Well, this is precisely the language used by the Prophet when picturing the result of the smiting of this "stone" "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

The obvious meaning then of these words is that after the judgment of the nations is over; what is left of human affairs, will be under the rulership of God, in the person of Jesus Christ and His glorified saints. Dan. 7:18, 27 ; 1 Cor. 6:2 ; Rev. 3:21 ; Rev. 20:4, 6.

But what constitutes this supernatural "stone"? We answer, As there are two aspects of this Millennial phase of the kingdom of God, namely an earthly and a heavenly, this "stone" must apply to both these aspects.

ITS HEAVENLY ASPECT

Its heavenly aspect must refer to the glorified Christ -Head and Body. Christ is spoken of as "a stone of stumbling" to His own nation, and also to the world that rejects Him. (Isa. 8:14; 1 Pet. 2:8.) In Eph. 3:20, He is called the "chief corner stone" to His Church. Again in Matt. 21:42, 44, He is likened to a descending stone that shall crush all his enemies, who shall stand opposed to His rule when He shall come the second time

"Did ye never read in the Scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected the same is become the head of the corner ... whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken, but upon whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder."

In these Scriptures we have brought to view the "stone" in three positions

1 On the ground -- representing Christ in His humiliation, rejected by His own nation, and by the world.

2 In the air -- representing Christ ascended to Heaven. That portion of the vision referring to Christ, the chief corner stone being "cut out of the mountain," has had its fulfillment. But Christ's people also form a part of the heavenly aspect of this supernatural "stone". They are called by St. Peter "living stones". (1 Pet. 2:5.) This part of the "stone" structure has been in process of being cut out during the entire Gospel Age. Like that of their Lord, their birth will be a supernatural one (born again) "cutout without hands", and at Christ's Advent all of these "living stones" will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and then the *heavenly* aspect of the "stone cut *out* of the mountain" will be completed.

3 The stone descending -- representing Christ coming from heaven with the mighty army of His glorified saints, to put down all rule and authority and power, to overthrow His enemies, to save His people Israel from their foes, and to assume the scepter of universal dominion and establish the kingdom of God over earth's peoples.

ITS EARTHLY ASPECT

Thus far we have touched upon "the cutting out of the stone" and its "becoming a great mountain" from the heavenly phase. We have seen that this has had to do altogether with the spiritual rulers of the Millennial Kingdom. But there is an earthly phase, which has to do with the nations of earth, who, while some of their peoples will assist in administering the government, will nevertheless, constitute the subjects of this heavenly Kingdom.

In regard to this aspect of the kingdom, all the Prophets are united in their testimony, that among the earthly nations, twelve-tribed Israel as *one* nation will be the head. One prophecy, which is a sample of many that declare this, is found in Ezek. 37:22: "I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." From very many prophecies we learn that the Jewish peoples in quite large numbers will be found in Palestine enduring great trouble and affliction at the time the governments in general over the earth are falling. However, the same prophecies inform us that they will be the first to take notice or understand what really has occurred. (Jer. 30: 1-11; Zech. 12:6-14.) One of the stupendous occurrences that will open the blinded eyes of the Israelites in Palestine will be the resurrection of the Old Testament Worthies. The resurrection of this class is called a "better resurrection". (Heb. 11:35.) "The 'better resurrection' which these Ancient Worthies will receive, superior to that of their fellow-creatures, will consist in its being an instantaneous resurrection to human perfection, at the beginning of the Millennial Age, instead of a gradual resurrection 'by judgments' during that Age. This will permit them to be the honored servants of the Christ, the servants of the Kingdom, during the Millennium, and, as perfect men, to be made 'princes [chiefs] in all the earth.' (Psa. 45:16.) It will be the privilege of these Worthies to administer the laws of the Kingdom, as the agents and representatives of the spiritual Christ, unseen of men. Their blessing, therefore, above their fellows, will be twofold: first, in that their trial is in the past, and that their reward of perfection will be instantaneous, giving them, by reason of this, nearly a thousand years of advantage over others; and second, because, under the Lord's providence, this will permit them to participate in the great work of restitution and blessing as the earthly phase of the Kingdom, the human agents, or channels, through whom the Christ will largely operate.

"The *anastasis* of the world in general will be dependent, in the case of each individual, upon his own progress 'on the highway' of holiness. ["And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there; nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, nor be found there; but they that walk there shall be delivered." -- Isa. 35:8, 9] As the Master explained, 'All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall *come forth*: But the coming forth is merely the awakening in the case of those whose judgment, or trial, shall not have been previously passed successfully; and as only the overcomers of this Gospel Age will come forth to the First Resurrection, and the overcomers of the past Ages to a better resurrection on the human plane, the remainder of the world will come forth, as the Lord has declared, to a resurrection by judgment. -- John 5:29.

FROM OUT THE TOMB

"In John 5:25, our Lord indicates how the passing from death to life is to be accomplished, saying, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' Bearing in mind that the

whole world is dead from the Divine standpoint, we see that the Apostles and the early Church were called out of this dead world, and as members of it were granted the opportunity of hearing the Message of life from the Son of God. In proportion as they gave heed they came into closer and closer vital relationship with the Life-Giver: and so all who have become one with Him from that day to the present have heard (obeyed) His voice, His message, and proportionally have come into His favor and will share His rewards. Similar will be the procedure of the coming Age: 'The knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth,' and 'There shall be no need to say to one's neighbor, Know the Lord, for all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest.' 'All that are in their graves shall - come forth,' shall be awakened that they may 'hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear [obey] shall live.'

"As with the Gospel Church of the present time, the hearing of the voice of the Son of God is a gradual matter, line upon line, precept upon precept, so it will be with the world in the Millennial Age. The obedient will gradually come to clearer and clearer appreciation of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of Divine love and justice and provision. But those who will obey that great Teacher's commands will not then receive persecutions and oppositions, as do those who seek to follow. His Word now, for then Satan will be bound, and the laws of the Kingdom will be force, and those who are in accord with righteousness will be blessed. and uplifted, and those who would fight against the Kingdom and oppose its rule in any particular will, after reasonable trial, be esteemed despisers of the grace of God, and will be cut off from amongst the people. -- Acts 3:23; Isa. 65:20.

"We see, then, that the declaration of our Lord of a general awakening of the dead signifies a great blessing, a fruit of His redemptive work."

The work of reconstruction, preparing the way for humanity's blessing, will begin in Israel's land. The resurrected Old Testament Worthies, as perfect men, will be the ones to fully understand the situation, and superintend the work of organizing the government Palestine. Those few of the peoples of the other nations left (Isa. 24:6) who will be scattered over the earth will begin to recognize the Divine authority of this government as the instructors, the teachers of mankind, and in the language of the Prophet will say: "Come, and let us go up to the mountain [Kingdom] of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." -- Micah 4: 1-4.

THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

"When Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the Ancient Worthies have been resurrected, and shall appear amongst the regathered Israelites, about the close of the time of Jacob's final trouble [Isa. 29:22-2.4] with Gog and Magog, their superior mental powers will speedily distinguish them from others. Moreover, their perfect minds will quickly grasp present-day knowledge and inventions; and they will be peculiar in many ways, as was the man Christ Jesus, of whom the people said, How knoweth this man literary matters, having never learned. (John

7:15.) And as Jesus taught the people positively, definitely, clearly, and not doubtfully and in a confused way, as did the scribes, so it will be with the perfected Ancient Worthies, when they appear amongst men. Besides, these Worthies, `princes,' will have direct communion with the spiritual Kingdom (Christ and the Church) as our Lord had with the angels, and as Adam enjoyed similar personal communion before he came under Divine sentence as a transgressor. These `princes' of the new earth (the new order of society) will be fully qualified for the honorable position assigned to them.

"Thus we see that when God's time for the inauguration of His Kingdom among men shall arrive, His agents will all be amply ready for the service; and their master-strokes of wise policy, their moderation and dignified self-control, and their personal exemplification of every grace and virtue will ,attract men and quickly enlist them-chastened under the great tribulation-in active co-operation. Even before the disclosure of their identity, doubtless the people of Israel will have remarked their preeminence over other men.

"Furthermore, let us remember that the very design of the great time of trouble, now nearing a culmination, is to break the stony hearts of the whole world, to bow down into the dust the proud, and break up the fallow ground with deep furrows of pain, trouble, sorrow, thus to make the world ready for the great blessings of the Millennial Kingdom. And it will serve its intended purpose: as the Prophet declares, `When Thy judgments [Lord] are [abroad] in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.' (Isa. 26 :9.) By that time all will have learned that selfish schemes and all schemes that can be devised and carried out by fallen men are defective, and lead only to various degrees of trouble and confusion. And all will by that time be longing for, but despairing of, a reign of righteousness-little realizing how near at hand it is." -- *Battle of Armageddon*, pp. 626, 627.

We are told that at the conclusion of Daniel's explanation of this most remarkable dream "the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him." While we are not directly told that Daniel refused such idolatrous homage, yet the words of Nebuchadnezzar that follow seem to show that he did do so. He had in fact already expressed his views on this very point, before the great monarch. (Ver. 2\$.) The king's words at the close of Daniel's explanation are: "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings arid a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. " -- Ver. 47.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR THOUGH RESPECTFUL OF GOD WAS NOT A CONVERTED MAN

Concerning Nebuchadnezzar's attitude as recorded in verses 46 and 47, .and the extent of his conversion to the God of heaven, the following from the pen of Albert Barnes is most worthy of the consideration of every true Christian

"We have in this chapter an instructive instance of the extent to which an irreligious man may go in showing respect to God. It cannot be supposed that Nebuchadnezzar was a truly pious man. His characteristics, and actions, both

before and after this, were those of a heathen, and there is no evidence that he was truly converted to God. Yet he evinced the highest respect for one who was a servant and a prophet of the Most High (Ver. 46), and even for God Himself. This was evinced in a still more remarkable manner at a subsequent period, chapter 4. In this he showed how far it is possible for one to go who has no real piety, and as such cases are not uncommon, it may not be improper to consider them for a moment. This respect for God extends to the following things: (1) An admiration of Him, as great and wise and powerful. The evidences of His power and wisdom are traced in His works. The mind may be impressed with that which is wise, or overpowered with that which is vast, without there being any real religion, and all this admiration may terminate on God, and be expressed in language of respect for Him, or for His ministers. (2) This admiration of God may be extended to whatever is *beautiful* in religion. The beauty of the works of nature, of the sky, of a landscape, of the ocean, of the setting sun, of the changing clouds, of the flowers of the field, may lead the thoughts up to God, and produce a certain admiration of a Being who has clothed the world with so much loveliness. There is a religion of sentiment as well as of principle; a religion that terminates on the *beautiful*, as well as a religion that terminates on the holy. The Greeks, natural admirers of beauty, carried this kind of religion to the highest possible degree; for their religion was, in all its forms, characterized by the love of the beautiful. So also there is much that is beautiful in Christianity, as well as in the works of God, and it is possible to be charmed with that without ever having felt any compunction of sin, or any love for pure religion itself. It is possible for one who has a natural admiration for that which is lovely in character to see a high degree of moral beauty in the character of the Redeemer; for one whose heart is easily moved with sympathy, to be affected in view of the sufferings of the injured Savior.. The same eyes that would weep over a well-told tale, or over a tragic representation on the stage, or over a scene of real distress, might weep over the wrongs and woes of Him who was crucified, and yet there might be nothing more than the religion of sentiment-the religion springing from mere natural feeling. (3) There is much poetic religion in the world. It is possible for the imagination to form such a view of the Divine character, that it shall seem to be lovely, while there may be scarcely a feature of that character that shall be correct. Not a little of the religion of the world is of this description-where such a God is conceived of as the mind chooses, and the affections are fixed on that imaginary being, while there is not a particle of love to the true God in the soul. So there is a poetic view of man, of his character, of his destiny while the real character of the heart has never been seen. So there is a poetic view of heaven-strongly resembling the views which the ancients had of the Elysian fields. But heaven as a place of holiness, has never been thought of, and would not be loved. Men look forward to a place where the refined and the intelligent; the amiable and the lovely; the accomplished and the upright; where poets, orators, warriors, and philosophers will be assembled together. This is the kind of religion that is often manifested in eulogies and epitaphs, and in conversation, where those who never had any better religion, and never pretended to any serious piety, are represented as having gone to heaven when they die. There are few who under the influence

of such a religion are not looking forward to some kind of a heaven; and few persons die, whatever may be their character, unless they are openly and grossly abandoned, for whom the hope is not expressed that they have gone safe to a better world. If we may credit epitaphs, and obituary notices, and funeral eulogiums, and biographies, there are few poets, warriors, statesmen, or philosophers, about whose happiness in the future world we should have any apprehension.

THE ESSENCE OF TRUE RELIGION

"But in all this there may be no true religion. There is no evidence that there was any in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, and as little is there in the instances now referred to. Such persons may have a kind of reverence for God as great and powerful and wise; they may have even a kind of pleasure in looking on the evidences of His existence and perfections in His works; they may have a glow of pleasurable emotion in the mere poetry of religion; they may be restrained from doing many things by their conscience; they may erect temples, and build altars, and contribute to the support of religion, and even be zealous for religion as they understand it, and still have no just views of God, and no true piety whatever.

"The mind that is truly religious is not insensible to all this, and may have as exalted notions of God as a great and glorious being, and be as much impressed with the beauty evinced in His works as in the cases supposed. True religion does not destroy the sense of the sublime and beautiful, but rather cultivates this in a higher degree. But there is much beside this that enters into true religion, and without which, all these things are vain. True religion always arises from just views of God as He is; not from Him as an imaginary being. True religion must regard God as having moral attributes; as benevolent and just and true and holy, and not merely as powerful and great. In all these things referred to, there is necessarily no moral excellence on the part of those who thus admire God and His works. The mere admiration of power implies in us no moral excellence. The admiration of the wisdom that makes the worlds and keeps them in their place; of the beauties of poetry, or of a flower or landscape though made of God, implies no moral excellence in us, and therefore, no religion. There is no more religion in admiring God as an architect or painter than there is in admiring Sir Christopher Wren, or Michael Angelo; and the mere admiration of the works of God, as such, implies no more moral excellency in us than it does to admire St. Paul's or St. Peter's [Cathedral]. In religion the heart does not merely admire the beautiful and the grand; it loves that which is pure and just and good and holy. It delights in God as a holy Being; it finds pleasure in His moral character, not merely in His greatness."

HIS WILL, NOT MINE BE DONE

O thou of little faith! why dost thou fear?
Didst thou forget that Jesus is so near?

And hast thou thought that thou must walk alone?
Behold now at thy side the loved One.

Aye, more than this, thou'rt held within His hand,
And 'twas Himself that hath thy trial planned!
There was a *need be* seen by Eye Divine,
Although, perchance, not visible to thine.

And wherefore wouldst thou see? Thou canst not tell
If what thy heart contends for would be well
Perhaps thy hope's fruition would be vain,
Or prove a life-long discipline of pain!

Hast thou not seen, in retrospective life,
That will of God which caused thee bitterest strife
Hath turned to sweetness -- while the thing He gave
To suit thy will grew darker than the grave?

There's rest supreme for souls that choose His will;
A blest security from every ill;
The things God chooses for us never fail!
They have their anchorage within the veil.

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

VOL. VI JUNE 15, 1923 No. 12

OUR ANNUAL MEETING

THE annual meeting of the PASTORAL BIBLE INSTITUTE held according to announcement on Saturday, June 2, at two o'clock, was much blessed of the Lord to His honor and to the general profit and encouragement of the brethren. The place of gathering, the parlors of the INSTITUTE, having a seating capacity of about one hundred, was in every way satisfactory. As the membership of the INSTITUTE covers a wide range of territory, it was as usual represented to a considerable extent by proxy. The meeting was a peaceful and quiet one, and the general order and spirit that prevailed was indeed commendable; to the Lord we render the praise.

In line with the usual custom the brethren who have had the responsibility of this ministry rendered reports of the INSTITUTE'S activities during the past year. These were listened to with keen interest as also with appreciation. The friends availed themselves the privilege of making inquiry into one feature or another of the work and offered suggestions for the consideration of those who should constitute the Directorate the coming year. In rendering up their stewardship, the directors whose term of office expired expressed appreciation of the privilege of service during the year past; they acknowledged that their efforts and service had been very imperfect and were far from being all that they could have desired; nevertheless, the hope was expressed that what had been accomplished was

acceptable the Lord through the great Redeemer's sacrifice. Following the report and general discussion, the business of electing anew Board was taken up, and balloting took place. The closing hour of the meeting, while the vote was being counted, was devoted to prayer, praise, and testimony, which seemed to rejoice the hearts of all. The Divine blessing was invoked on behalf of the brethren who should be called upon to assume the responsibility of the ministry for the coming year. The report of the election inspectors at the close the meeting showed the election of the following brethren

I. I. MARGESON
I. F. HOSKINS
E. J. PRITCHARD
H. C. ROCKWELL
P. L. GREINER
F. H. MCGEE
R. E. STREETER

THE INSTITUTE'S GENERAL REPORT

It seems clearly to our mutual advantage that once a year we at least briefly review and consider together the results of our association, in the greatest and most blessed of all ministries. The years speed swiftly on, though none too swiftly when, as we realize, each one brings us nearer to our goal-"The hope set before us in the Gospel" -- "The Kingdom of God's. dear Son" in which,, with all the faithful of this Age, we hope to share as members of the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife," associated with Him in His throne Yet while rejoicing in what we believe to be the nearness of the Kingdom, another thought presents itself-Are we ready for it? Have we the graces of the Holy Spirit shed abroad in our hearts? Have we the fruits of the Spirit well ripened in our characters? Experience indicates that the greater our faith the more earnest will be our zeal in the race .for the prize. set before us. If by God's grace we discern with clearer vision the goal of glory, honor, and immortality, in association with our Redeemer in the glorious work of His Messianic Kingdom of a thousand years, what manner of persons ought we to be in "All holy living and godliness" while awaiting that consummation!

Our reports are not presented with a view to boast before the world or each other of what we are doing, neither is there any thought or desire to show the progress or development-of an earthly institution or organization, for indeed our efforts are not in the direction of such. Rather we review our co-operation together as followers of the Lord and note in what directions our efforts have been prospered and blessed to His `praise for the general advancement of His Cause amongst the brethren. And how much we need one another's encouragement in this day of peculiar and searching trials and tests!

Notwithstanding the fact that as students of the prophetic Word, giving heed to. the more sure word of prophecy, we recognize that we are living in a most marvelous period of human history when the signs and indications about us betoken the presence of a new power in earth's affairs and a change of dispensation, yet it is plainly recognized that we are till living in the old

dispensation under the reign of sin and death, and that therefore we walk by faith and not by sight. How thankful we are that this way of faith, this way of following our Lord in the dark, is a way in which we can rejoice, because it is His way. This we can say, even though it is a way of sorrow, a way of trial -- the way of the Cross: Have we not more than all others to rejoice us in respect to the Divine Plan of the Ages? We surely have the only satisfying portion we know of anywhere. It satisfies our longings as nothing else can do.

Looking over the past year we feel that we can say with confidence that there is no room for discouragement. This does not mean that there have been no trials nor reverses in the way, for of such there have been many. And though we may not at times understand the meaning of all the Divine providences and dealings, yet there is every evidence that our Father's good purposes are being carried out in respect to all His faithful people in the earth today. Our encouragement and confidence then comes from realizing that He is seeking for a true and tried people, and His Word has long in advance informed us that the pathway to the Goal is a hard and difficult one, and that He is not only able but abundantly willing and desirous of leading forth to victory all His loyal and obedient children.

THE HERALD MINISTRY

Our journal, the HERALD, probably constitutes our most effective means of ministering encouragement today. We have continued to send forth the journal during the past year, even though the subscription price, one dollar, is not half sufficient to cover the cost of its production for the number of subscribers we have. Nevertheless, the general fund has been such that we have been enabled to draw from it to balance the subscription account. The evidence is that a rich blessing has gone forth with the visits of the HERALD. The Lord's people in these times are very much scattered -- the Classes are generally small; in many places there are two and three, and often there are the solitary ones who have fellowship only through correspondence and the printed page. We are very often assured by letter from these that the HERALD comes as a very welcome visitor, bringing comfort and refreshment to heart and mind; that it is a means of general fellowship in spiritual things, and is instrumental in stirring up the pure mind by way of remembrance.

Both the Publishers and the Editorial Staff of the HERALD realize keenly the responsibility associated with the issuing of the journal. As is well known, the policy pursued from the commencement of the publication has been that of printing what is believed by the Editorial Committee to be the Truth-not necessarily the truth upon all subjects, but mainly spiritual truth-that which is thought to be for the edification of the new creation. Accordingly, the earnest effort of the brethren has been to print, not their own fancies or theories or those of others in the journal, but that which they believed to be well grounded upon facts and Scripture.

It is recognized that along some lines treated in the HERALD there is room for an honest difference of opinion, and while the brethren associated in this ministry are firmly convinced themselves that the expositions of various features published are

sustained as Truth, yet they have carefully sought to avoid dogmatizing, and are desirous that every reader shall prove all things to his own satisfaction, and accept only what is believed to be supported by the words of inspiration. The regular reader will readily recall therefore that repeated admonitions have appeared in the columns of the HERALD, urging all to exercise full freedom in thinking for themselves and in settling every point of faith and doctrine as each thinks best, and that any difference of opinion with regard to matters not involving the fundamentals of our relationship with God (obedient faith in Christ and consecration to the Divine will) should not be allowed to cause dissension, strife, and division in the Church, nor to disrupt the fellowship of the brethren. And this continues to be the positive attitude of the brethren of the INSTITUTE.

All the present circumstances, together with the history of the past nineteen centuries, lead to the conviction that that which is most needed among professed Christians today is the exercise of greater tolerance, forbearance, love.

The subscription list of the HERALD remains about as it has the preceding years, approximately 2200. While some have been dropped from our list from time to time, other new names have been added. We feel, however, that the HERALD list should be larger than it is—that there are other earnest Christians who would be benefited and helped spiritually by the journal. Our brethren have had the matter under advisement from time to time and have been doing all, they can to secure the interest of others who we have reason to believe, would be blessed by the regular visits of the HERALD. Seemingly we must leave the matter in the hands of the friends. Those who receive a blessing from reading the HERALD Will surely feel interested in helping others to a share in the same blessing, comfort, and assistance. Especially are we interested in having the names of all consecrated Christians on our list. Those who have any means of learning the names of other earnest Christians, no matter of what denomination, will please send them to us and we shall be glad to mail them sample copies of the journal from time to time. Some have felt somewhat disappointed that their names were stricken from our list. All such we again assure that they are welcome to the journal so long as it is published, regardless of the subscription fee, but they should ask for it -- either ask it free, paid for from the special fund, or ask for it on credit, payable at convenience, even if that should mean never.

THE REVELATION AND THE DIVINE PLAN

As has been recently announced in the columns of the HERALD, the INSTITUTE is undertaking to publish in book form the Revelation expositions that have appeared in the HERALD during the past four years. The decision to do this has been reached only after careful and long deliberation, and after having had a general expression from the brethren from various parts of the world. Judging from the blessing received by to some Classes who have been studying the Revelation with the assistance of the HERALD expositions, we are confident that the matter prepared in two volumes and placed in the hands of the friends will prove a rich blessing to many more. Let our prayers be to this end.

Our volume, THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES, published more than a year ago, has been available for the friends during the past year. Though there has been very little regular colporteuring for the book, some have been quite active in placing the volume here and there by giving, loaning, or selling the book to those they were able to interest in it. The volume in the former style, supplied by Brother Russell, has already had an enormous circulation and has been placed in thousands of homes throughout the land. Logically, therefore, the opportunities of the present are of an individual character than that of a general distribution of the volume, and this was our thought originally in recommending the publishing of the book. We still have a good supply on hand, and desire once more to impress upon the minds of all who love the Truth that the distribution of the DIVINE PLAN IS surely a most excellent method of witnessing to the honor of our heavenly King. We know of none better. How many there are about us today groping in darkness who would love to know the true God and His gracious Plan, if only they were sure where they might obtain such knowledge.

We urge none to attempt a great smiting work -- neither that of smiting the brethren, nor the world, nor the kingdoms of this world. Nor do we endeavor to sound a call to unite the brethren to build up another great movement, system, or organization, for such is not the mission of the Church in the flesh. The final organization of the Church, and the great movement toward which we are steadfastly looking is that of, the Church triumphant glorified together with Him to enter upon the Kingdom work. But while we continue in the time of our pilgrimage, it is still the duty of all to let their light shine in a dark place, to assist other prospective members of the Bride to become ready for their future work; and surely the DIVINE PLAN tells the story in a most beautiful form.

Free tracts have also been supplied during the past year, though in limited quantities. Hence we have not advised the brethren to attempt general distribution of these, but to make it more of an individual matter, placing the Truth with those principally who give evidence of some desire to read. We are now having our stock of "Where are the Dead?" tract replenished, so that the friends may be encouraged to order these more freely.

The special issue of the HERALD containing the subject regarding Hell and the Second Coming of Christ has been used quite freely. The supply of 15,000 originally printed was exhausted and a new edition of 8,000 more has just been printed. Occasionally the inquiry comes to us as to what results are to be noted from the various efforts put forth. We reply that while the results are not great from an outward point of view, and not many appear to be accepting the Truth, yet they are perhaps all that we should be expecting at this time. We can rejoice that there is an occasional one who gives evidence of truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness and who responds to the Truth. Let us leave the matter of numbers, however, to the Lord, being fully assured that He will find the foreordained number to compose the Elect, the Kingdom. Meantime our endeavor to herald the Truth will have a blessed effect upon our hearts if we persevere in the proper spirit and motive.

OUR FELLOWSHIP THROUGH THE MAIL

Our correspondence with the brethren in all parts of the world continues to be a source of much encouragement to us, and is an important means of acquainting us with the general state of the friends spiritually. We are glad to believe that a good work of grace is going on among the readers of the HERALD. There are those who are passing through specially severe trials and discouraging experiences, and are greatly in need of a word of comfort. We are glad of the privilege of assisting these, and are often specially encouraged by being assured that our prayers and humble efforts have been availing. Others tell of how they are rejoicing in the way, in the Lord's daily leading and providences, and are increasingly hopeful of reaching the end of the Narrow Way in glorious triumph, when they hope to meet all the faithful beyond the veil. It is our trust that we may continue to hear from all the dear brethren, and that our fellowship in this way may be mutually edifying.

Number of letters received 3320

Number of letters sent out 3960

THE MINISTRY THROUGH VISITING BRETHREN, CONVENTIONS, ETC.

Though we have not been able to accomplish as much as we would like through the Pilgrim branch, we believe the Divine blessing has attended the efforts put forth and that all has been accomplished in keeping with the Lord's providence for this time. For a considerable portion of the year the Pilgrim branch has consisted principally of several brethren making visits locally on Sundays to points within 200 and 300 miles radius from their home town. Reports of these visits are always encouraging and such ministries serve to keep the Classes in sympathetic touch and to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance. Indeed it is remarkable in these days how like the conditions of the early Church are those of our, time; now as then it becomes a matter of the Lord's people assembling in little groups here and there for mutual helpfulness and comfort in the Christian life; and as at the present time, so it was in the apostolic period, the little gatherings of faithful brethren under the Lord's providence were visited by elder brethren of ability. Thus we read of the great Apostle Paul and Barnabas : "And when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." (Acts 14:21, 22.) In addition, to what has been done during the past year, we believe the prospect is fair for at least one brother to be engaged regularly, giving all his time during the coming year.

We should not omit reference in this connection to the visit of two of the brethren to Great Britain last summer. The visit covered about two months. In addition to attending two General Conventions, upwards of 30 Classes were visited in England; Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. That the Divine blessing accompanied this pilgrimage and the ministries of the brethren, there has been indeed pronounced evidence. Repeated expressions have come, stating what spiritual joy, hope, and encouragement have been realized as a result of those seasons of fellowship. Our

records clearly show that there has been a great increase in the HERALD subscription list and a quickening of interest generally in Great Britain since the visits of the brethren to those countries in 1920 and 1922. A lengthy report, giving the details of the last pilgrimage was published in the HERALD Of October 1, 1922. Hence we are not making further mention of it here.

Number of Pilgrims 18
Miles traveled 39,962
Meetings held 302
Total attendance 9,336

The General Conventions of the past year have been four in number: Springfield, Providence, St. Louis, and Boston. We can surely say for all of these what has been said of our conferences in previous years: they have been holy convocations in the Lord, and have all been times of refreshing and spiritual uplift, 'of drawing near to God, resulting in the better preparation on the part of the brethren to persevere in the life of faith and godliness. Our Conventions are generally made up of scattered brethren, some of whom have very little fellowship at home, and therefore such opportunities and seasons of fellowship have been specially appreciated by these. As reports have appeared in the HERALD from time to time respecting each Convention,, we need not repeat here.

BRETHREN ACROSS THE SEAS

With pleasure indeed we include in our yearly report reference to the brethren in other countries, for our correspondence includes these, and the HERALD subscription list is made up to a considerable extent of friends in other, lands, principally in, Great Britain and Australia. We are in touch not only with individuals of these countries, but through the BIBLE STUDENTS COMMITTEE Of Great Britain and the BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE Of Australia, we are kept generally informed respecting conditions and progress of the brethren; and as we would suppose, with them, the circumstances are much the same as they are with us. It is simply a matter of a few here and there earnestly endeavoring to encourage and strengthen one another to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and to hold fast to the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. We desire to express very earnest appreciation of the kindly assistance and co-operation rendered by both the. BIBLE STUDENTS COMMITTEE and the BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE. Their efforts have indeed- been fruitful, especially along the line of increasing the circulation of the HERALD. Other countries than those mentioned above from whom we have received encouraging messages are Scandinavia, Germany, Denmark, Holland, India, and South Africa. It is the same message that comes from all of these lands- assurance of peace and joy in the knowledge of the great Divine Plan of the Ages, in the blessed Savior that God has provided, and expressions of full confidence that the Divine purposes shall all be accomplished, resulting in the glorious exaltation of the Church in the First Resurrection and the restitution of all things in behalf of the groaning creation.

Looking now into the future to another year, we all realize that our pathway is indeed one of faith, and that we know not what awaits us,

"God kindly veils our eyes,
And o'er each step of our onward way
He makes new scenes to rise."

Nor do we need to know, for we are fully assured that since God is for us, none greater can come against us. "Faith can firmly trust Him, come what may." If our pathway in the days that have gone has been a thorny one and beset by trials and discouragement, we may be sure that in the future to the end of our earthly journey, it will not be less difficult, for hereunto have we been, called. Let us then by faith lay hold of the blessed promise Divine that "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." This means that in the midst of all of life's perils, whether they be perils in the world or perils among false brethren; or whether it be in the midst of surrounding and increased infidelity of our time, we shall be kept safe beneath His wing. Let patient endurance, work faithfully in us. A few more days or weeks or years and our trials and testings will be over and we shall see His face. Be sober, be vigilant, be zealous. The Lord and His mighty angels look on to see us finish our race with joy and to encourage and assist us, and to cause that all things shall work out for our preparation for the Kingdom.

"How light our trials then will seem,
How short our pilgrim way;
The life of earth a fitful dream;
Dispelled by dawning day."

TREASURER'S FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance on hand May 15, 1922 \$825.12

RECEIPTS DURING YEAR:

Tract Fund \$6,670.44

Subscriptions 2,346.41

Bibles, Mottoes, etc. 452.86

Volume I Sales 369.32

Revelation Volumes 813.72 10,652.75

\$11,477.87

DISBURSEMENTS DURING YEAR

Herald \$5,689.83

Free Literature 94.66

Pilgrim Expense 1,534.60

Convention Expense 104.67

Office -Expense 365.67

Bibles, Mottoes, etc. 370.15

Administration Expense 701.82

Maintenance of, Property 996.69 9,858.09

Balance on hand May 15, 1923 \$1,619.78

STATEMENT BY AUDITING COMMITTEE

Brooklyn, N. Y. May 26, 1923.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The undersigned by appointment of the Philadelphia, Providence, and Springfield Ecclesiastical Conventions met and audited the financial accounts of the PASTORAL BIBLE INSTITUTE on the above date and desire to certify that the same were correct and in good condition.

Your brethren in Christ,
J. C. Laird
C. H. Smith
G. E. Miller
Auditing Committee.

ESTHER, THE PATRIOT QUEEN

"Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this "
Esther 4 : 13-5 : 3.

THE story of Queen Esther is a most remarkable one, and confirms the proverb that "Truth is stranger than fiction." Esther was a Jewess, noted for her beauty, and on this account she was chosen of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to be his queen. It is presumed that, she received the name Esther, which signifies a *star*, because

of her beauty, Hishtar being the Chaldaic equivalent for Venus. She succeeded Vashti, the former queen, who had displeased the king and been divorced.

In the opposite course of these two queens we find a lesson bearing on the Suffragette question of today. The king had a banquet with the lords of his empire. It may be assumed that it was a revel; and that the king and his guests, at the height of the revel, were more or less under the influence of wine. Giving Queen Vashti the benefit of the doubt, this was probably her reason for ignoring the king's request.

Many will say that she did just right in asserting her womanhood, in "standing up for her rights," etc. It should not be disputed that she had rights and that she exercised them. We merely offer the suggestion that in question of "rights," along, lines of force and compulsion, Queen Vashti won a victory which cost her dearly.

In Queen Esther's procedure, which is the subject of this lesson, we see the opposite course pursued-the queen won a great victory with happy results by a totally different method, and one which in our judgment recommends itself to the wisest and best of men and women.

Vashti could have taken a similar course but did not. However much she might have felt that the king's requirement of her presence would expose her to jest or rudeness, she should have relied upon her charm and tact and purity and upon her husband's love and care. While it was not hers to intrude into the banquet, once invited, her presence should have been a hallowed one, sweet perfume, a rebuke to any immodesty. Like many another well-meaning woman, Queen Vashti was unwise; she abandoned the most potent defense of pure womanhood when she met command with refusal. But then we must remember that Vashti was neither a Christian nor a Jewess, and was therefore without any Divine instruction or guidance.

ESTHER STOOPED FOR VICTORY

Queen Esther was not a suffragette. When invited to become queen she did not decline and see to it that she stood upon the same ground as Vashti. She accepted her accession as of Divine providence. She clothed, herself, with humility and with the most becoming of her fine apparel. She made herself as agreeable to the king as possible. It is presumed that at this time she was in her fifteenth year. Haman, the king's favorite, took a dislike to the gate-keeper of the palace, Mordecai, a Jew, because the latter did not bow before him, as did others. Mordecai was so faithful that Haman could not hope to find a fault with him, and thus to cause his removal. His hatred extended to the entire Jewish race. He prevailed upon the king to issue a decree that all the Jews of his kingdom should be set upon -and killed as enemies of the country. This, of course, would include Mordecai, his special enemy, whom he would then feel free to kill.

While the more faithful of the Jews had gone back to Palestine to repair its wastes and 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 this great trial, severe testing, which undoubtedly taught them a ,valuable lesson in their far-off homes.

As the time for the enforcement of the decree drew nearer and nearer, Mordecai and all the Jews through-, out-the Empire were a in great distress and fear, yet not without hope that their God would work some deliverance.

Queen Esther was cousin to Mordecai, although the latter was old enough to be her father. She was, indeed, his. adopted daughter. He appealed to her to use the influence of. her position to have the king rescind the order. She delayed because, strangely enough, at this very time the king had shown a coldness toward her, and had not called for her for a month.

LOVE AND BEAUTY CONQUERED

Mordecai pressed the matter more urgently, assuring her that she was about to lose a great privilege of service for her people; that God had evidently raised her to this position in the kingdom for this very hour and for this very purpose of bringing to the Jews relief and that, if she failed to note and to use the privilege, God doubtless would use some other agency and still bring deliverance in harmony with His promises. The appeal was sufficient. The queen merely delayed for three days more, requesting that Mordecai and all the Jews of the royal city join with her in a three-days fast before God, which of course included petitions to God for the deliverance of His people, and for wisdom to guide Esther in her endeavor to use her talent and opportunity wisely.

Queen Esther risked her station, and even her life in going into the king's presence without a summons; but, attired in her royal apparel, she risked everything for her race. She charmed the king; who extended to her his royal sceptre, which she touched. He perceived that she had a request to make, and urged her to speak. Wisely she refrained and asked the king and Haman, his prime minister, her enemy, to partake of a special dinner with her in the court garden. After the visit the king again urged her to say what wish of his attractive queen he could gratify. This was Queen Esther's opportunity, and she replied, asking why, if he loved her, he would issue an edict that she should be killed, and all of her race, the Jews.

Her case was immediately won. The king perceived that he had been inveigled by Haman into making an unjust decree. A bad law stipulated that no decree of a Persian king could be changed. This decree had been stamped with the king's seal, and the king, angry at Haman, made another decree, namely that Haman should be hanged, and that the Jews everywhere should be notified that they had royal consent to use force against their enemies in defending their lives. 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 counselor, 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 of the Jews in the palace city being destroyed.

DANIEL THE BELOVED OF JEHOVAH

SERIES IV

NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND HIS GOLDEN MEMORIAL,

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits he set it tip in the plain .of Dura, in province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had setup. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up." -- Dan. 3:1-3.

This very remarkable incident is explained by most writers from the standpoint that it must have occurred some years after Daniel had interpreted and made known the dream of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in the preceding chapter. The time when it occurred, however, is not mentioned anywhere in the book, and there seems to be no authority either Scriptural or secular for fixing, the date some sixteen years or more after Daniel interpreted the dream, as many have tried to do. Mr. Barnes, who expresses the thought -of a number of writers, has said that it is impossible to determine the time with certainty; though he seems to think, in harmony with others, that it is necessary to allow period of sufficient length between the interpretation of the dream and the erection of his statue in order to account for what he thinks was a fact, namely the effacing from the mind of Nebuchadnezzar the favorable impression of the true God that was made by the dream. For this reason he says that when reading chapters two and three we should bear the thought in mind that such an interval had elapsed, in order to get, the right impression on this point.

WHY WAS THE GREAT IMAGE ERECTED?

Different views are also held respecting what this great golden image was designed by Nebuchadnezzar to represent. Some maintain that it was a statue of his father, and its erection and dedication expressed his desire that honor and worship be given to him. Others hold that it represented Nebuchadnezzar himself. Most writers have held that it was an image of the great idol god, Baal, and that

the decree of Nebuchadnezzar was designed to compel his many subjects to worship this great idol deity. If this be the true interpretation of what Nebuchadnezzar had in mind, it surely would indicate that the favorable impression of the true God made upon him by Daniel's interpretation of the dream, was entirely effaced. In order that we may appreciate the view held by these writers we will need to recall that when Daniel interpreted the dream, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged Jehovah to be "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets," and that he furthermore manifested his reverence for Him, and his desire to do Him honor, by falling upon his face before Daniel; and commanding that oblation and sweet odors should be offered to him. (Chap. 2:46-48.) All these writers are agreed that the erection of the golden image or statue by Nebuchadnezzar, and his worship of it, was an act of idolatry, and from this standpoint was a sure evidence that the impressions produced upon his mind concerning the true God had been lost and that he had relapsed *entirely* into heathenism. We can not but ask, Why is it necessary to so believe, especially since there is nothing whatever presented in the record that enables us to determine to whom this image was *erected* or what it was designed to commemorate? It will be seen, therefore, that as the record is silent about the matter, it will be proper to inquire whether it may not be that there is another, and a more reasonable view, and one that is in harmony with other statements in the book of Daniel indicating that Nebuchadnezzar's reverence for the God of the Hebrews had not changed. In order to determine the facts it will be necessary to have an understanding of the Babylonian religion itself, the attitude of the Babylonians toward other religions, and the extent to which Nebuchadnezzar gave up his heathen ideas and accorded to Jehovah, the God of Daniel, honor and worship, on account of the dream. Concerning these matters it will be sufficient to say that while the Babylonians were heathen idolaters, worshipers of many gods, they were not persecutors of others in religious matters. One, well able to express the truth concerning this matter, has said, "The universal maxim was that 'the gods of all nations were to be respected, and hence foreign gods might be introduced for worship, and respect paid to them, without in any degree detracting, from the honor which was due to their own.'" There is no reason to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar was converted from heathenism, or the worshiping of many gods, through the display of Jehovah's power in making known his dream and its interpretation through Daniel. The truth of the matter is that he was led to acknowledge that among the many gods there existed the God of the Hebrews, and at the time, at least, he was convinced that the God of the Hebrews was superior to all other gods.

SOME REASONABLE DEDUCTIONS

Keeping before our minds these facts, and considering also that there is nothing in the narrative that fixes the time of its occurrence, nothing that even intimates that this image was erected in honor of Nebuchadnezzar, his father, or even of Baal, we believe that there is a more plausible interpretation of this incident, an interpretation that gives us a more reasonable, correct, and Scriptural understanding of Nebuchadnezzar as a man, who, while an absolute, despotic

monarch, and a heathen idolater, had many superior traits of character which writers generally fail to give him credit for. When all the facts that are stated in the Scriptures about him are carefully considered, the following description of this great world monarch by an eminent writer will be admitted to be a fair and just statement of his character

"I take Nebuchadnezzar to have been a man of a deeper, broader, and nobler nature than Napoleon Bonaparte. He was as great a warrior and much greater emperor. He was a man of larger intelligence, of less selfishness, and of a much more generous and earnest mind. He was impulsive and hasty betimes, and even harsh, but his impulses were not mere passions, and were generally founded upon correct reasonings. He was quick in forming conclusions, and very firm in carrying them into effect. He mostly did his own thinking and spoke and acted officially according to his own convictions, no matter against whom or what they went. He was a heathen potentate, absolute in his authority, but he had a deep religious sense, and was greatly influenced by it and came the nearest to being a true servant of God of all heathen kings of whom we have any account. When he beheld evidences of the presence and power of God, he noted them, acknowledged them, and fashioned his actions accordingly. He had a conscience, and a strong perception of duty and right. When he beheld sham and falsehood, he was severe upon it. When he saw the Divine hand, he bowed before it, and used his royal prerogatives to give others the benefit of what he himself knew and felt. When convinced that messengers of the Most High were before him; . he honored them and gave glory to the God of heaven, and was not ashamed to make confession before all men of what he believed. He sometimes [as we shall see later on] forgot himself in the midst of his greatness and glory, and took to himself honors which evinced an overweening pride; but when punished for it, he frankly confessed it, and proclaimed it to the whole empire, that men might know and fear the God of heaven. (See Chapter 4.) He never entirely let go his idolatry in which he was reared, but he never failed to hold and confess the infinite superiority of God, even the God of heaven, over all the idol gods of his kingdom. He was not a saint, but he was nearer to being one than some who profess the true religion, and have greater opportunities and fewer hindrances than he possessed."

We now come to the consideration of what constitutes a reasonable, as well as a Scriptural explanation of what seems to have been in Nebuchadnezzar's mind in the erection of this great golden image or statue, and, the grandeur of the imposing ceremonies held in connection with its unveiling and dedication. The uppermost thought, it would seem, in the mind of the great monarch was to give honor to the God of heaven. He felt his indebtedness to Him, not only in connection with the dream and its interpretation, but also in connection with the fact that, as the dream had revealed to him, the great God of heaven had honored him by giving him his vast empire.

DESIRED TO HONOR DANIEL'S GOD

That it was his desire to give honor to Daniel's God, and that others of his great empire should do the same is expressed. by him in his own words in the preceding

chapter, as we read: "Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him." The words that follow show that he ascribed the greatest possible honor to Daniel's God, Jehovah, that could be expected of one of his heathen persuasion, as we read: "The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret." It would seem then that this incident of the erection of the golden image is closely associated with the event, indeed is the natural outcome of the great monarch's dream and its interpretation.

There is nothing in the narrative that connects the unveiling of this image or statue with the worship of Baal, or any other of the Chaldean deities. The design, the erection, and the ceremonies associated with the dedication of this statue seem to have originated in Nebuchadnezzar's own mind, and not in the minds of the Chaldean priests. Whatever it represented or whatever it was designed to honor, was evidently something altogether new to even the heathen worshipers. If it was designed, as in all probability it was, to give honor to a deity, that deity was a new, a more sublime, a more wise and powerful one than any of those known to him before.

The ceremonial worship connected with the unveiling of this golden image is clearly distinguished from the worship of the generally acknowledged deities of the Babylonians. The Chaldeans who made accusation of the three Hebrews, certainly make a distinction between whatever may be represented by this golden image and the other acknowledged deities, as we read "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up." Nebuchadnezzar himself and likewise the three Hebrews make the same distinction. (See ver. 14, 18.) Furthermore, in connection with the worship of Baal and the other supposed deities of the Babylonians, there were special priests, whose duties were to conduct the ceremonies associated with the worship, but there are none mentioned in the narrative, as having anything to do with the novel ceremony of the unveiling of this golden image or statue.

A NATIONAL MEMORIALIZATION TO THE KING OF HEAVEN

The eminent writer already quoted has with good reason offered the following solution: "As I read this narrative, this 'image of gold' and the extraordinary manner of its dedication, are vitally connected with the king's vision, and related far more to the Almighty God of Daniel than to any Chaldean deity. It was Nebuchadnezzar's own original thought suggested, by the revelation that was vouchsafed to him by Jehovah, and meant to be an official and national memorialization of that 'Lord of kings,' and 'Revealer of secrets' who had thus shown him the character, succession, and fate of all earthly empires. So far as it being the result of a change in his mind and feelings, or an obliteration of his convictions as described in the preceding chapter, this whole business was the direct fruit of these convictions, and the way his heathen mind took to express and materialize what impressed him so profoundly. God had shown him a great, bright, and terrible image. He had learned from God's unmistakable Prophet that it was a Divine symbol of God's wisdom, power, and providence in the world, from his own empire to the end of time. It was so remarkable in itself, and so sublimely sacred in all its connections, relations, and impressiveness, that it was impossible that he should forget it, or that he should not think of making some memorial of it, particularly as it related, first of all, to himself and his own empire. He had felt it right and due that he should prostrate himself before that spirit of Almightyness which showed itself in his dream, and in the Prophet who had recovered and expounded that dream; and why should not all the heads of the kingdom be summoned to do the same? The thing was all mixed up with what we would expect in a vigorous heathen mind under such experiences and convictions; but it, was a most natural outcome of a great, honest, and original thinker under the circumstances ... The figure he set up was not that God, but it was the materialization of the wonderful image that God had shown him, and which was that God's own symbol of His great power and administration on earth. Heathen as he was, how could he better memorialize this Jehovah-power than in Jehovah's own picture of it, of which picture he himself and his empire were divinely said to be a golden head? And with the Jehovah-power thus memorialized after the fashion of its own showing to him in the dream, what more natural than that all his empire, through its constituted representatives, 'the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces,' should be officially convened to witness the unveiling of the figure, and to go through the ceremony of falling down before it in lowly homage, as he himself had bowed before the spirit of that Jehovah-power in Daniel?

NOT THE WORK OF A FANATICAL ZEALOT

"This view of the case fully explains every particular in the record, and serves to show, not a debased and oblivious apostasy on the part of the honest-minded king, but that the impression the revelation made upon him became a living power in his soul, which set his great and original genius to work to bring his whole empire into some sort of official accord with it. It was neither the work of a fanatical

zealot of Bel-Merodach, nor of a tool of envious idolaters, nor of an arbitrary despot capriciously bent on changing the religion of his empire, nor of a tyrannical and self-deifying egotist, nor of a weakling in the hands of a set of grasping Chaldean Priests. On the contrary, it was the work of a great, deep-thinking, honest-minded, self-poised, and noble-meaning, imperial man, who had had a true, sublime, and unmistakable revelation from the God of heaven, and who, under the devout and powerful impulses which it engendered, yet not entirely released from his heathen methods of thinking, laid hold upon his vast authority and riches to give what he regarded as a due and fitting national acknowledgment and memorial of the great Jehovah-power *which had thus* communicated with him. Hence this gigantic image of gold set up in a plain quite apart from the Chaldean temples. Hence the special, peculiar, and intensely national character of its dedication. Hence the novel ceremonies of the occasion, and the imperial decree that at the appointed signal every office-bearer in the realm should fall down in lowly admiration before it. And hence, also, the very severe penalty fore-announced to come upon any one who should refuse acknowledge and adore that Jehovah-power under the symbol which that Power had shown him in the vision.

"In this view of the matter we are not only obliged to modify our judgment of the king's character, so as to give him far higher credit than that which results from the current representations, but the same goes a great way toward his justification in the severity he used in enforcing obedience to his decree.

"Under the, clear and full light of revelation and the Divine institutes; which Nebuchadnezzar did not have, it is very plain that he made a great mistake, which can by no means be justified or excused on Biblical grounds; but the mistake was in methods and not in the motives. It was the mistake of defective education, not of intent. He meant it honestly, to acknowledge and glorify that very God of heaven, who had so remarkably communicated with him. He intended that his empire, through its assembled representatives, should thus acknowledge that God a tangible copy of the image given in the dream. All the depths his religious nature, experiences, and convictions would rise up insist upon the duty and propriety of compliance with what he had so devoutly and honestly arranged and commanded. Was not God over all gods and the Lord over all kings, who had so fully demonstrated His living power and purposes, to be reverently confessed by all lords and rulers? Was not that image the very likeness of that in which Jehovah had symbolized His Divine power and providence? Had not the king had ample proof that this God is a God of gods and Lord of kings? Was it not 'right, therefore, that every officer of the realm should be required to give this token of reverent acknowledgment to Him?

WHEREIN LAY THE ERROR?

"Besides, taking this figure as the materialization of the great image of the king's inspired dream, there was to him a very sacred identification of himself and his dominion with it. According to the Prophet's explanation of the vision, that gold represented Nebuchadnezzar, and his divinely-authenticated rule and authority.

To refuse obedience to his commands concerning it therefore took something of the element of treason and rebellion, not only to Nebuchadnezzar's authority, but likewise to that very Divinity which had so marvelously endorsed his sovereignty as given by God, who, -by His own presentations, had inseparably connected it with the image the king had thus materialized. Not to obey his solemn and devoutly intended command would thus necessarily present itself to him as a very great wickedness -- a stab at divinely authenticated sovereignty -- a setting at naught of the very golden head of all divinely-invested kings -- a casting of contempt upon the most serious and sacredly-founded undertakings of his life, as well as a criminal light-making of all the sacred experiences, convictions, and devout intentions of His Imperial Highness. Under such circumstances the man would not have been a man, or at all up to the requirements of the situation, or entitled to the ordinary credit of sincerity and sensibility as an administrator of the government, if he had affixed no stern penalties to a disregard of his orders, or only connived at the transgression of. them. If his foundation was wrong, his reasoning was right. Even our free government permits no man to take office under it without oath on the Holy Testament of God or solemn affirmation and appeal to the Almighty Lord of all, and annexes very rigid penalties to the violation of the same. From Nebuchadnezzar's standpoint it was but right, and no tyrannical harshness, that he should insist on punishing capitally whosoever should refuse the homage which he exacted. *The fault was not in the exaction, but in the heathen error of undertaking to materialize Divine things.*" -- *Voices From Babylon*, Joseph Seiss. In the succeeding article, consideration will be given to this decree of the king; of how it affected the three Hebrews, and of the fact that there was no thought or intention on the part of the king that it should get them into difficulty.

TRUST HIM MORE

Since the Father's arm sustains thee,
Peaceful be,
When a chastening hand restrains thee,
It is He.
Know His love in full completeness
Fills the measure of thy weakness;
If He wounds thy spirit sore,
Trust Him more.

Without measure, uncomplaining,
In His hand
Lay whatever things thou canst not
Understand.
Though the world thy folly spurneth,
From thy faith in pity turneth,
Peace thy inmost soul shall fill,
Lying still.

To His own the Savior giveth
Daily strength
To each troubled soul that striveth,
Peace at length.
Weakest lambs have largest share
Of this tender Shepherd's care.
Ask Him not, then, When? or How?
Only bow.

THE SHEPHERD'S CARE

GOD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:'-Psa. 23:6.

VIEWING the lessons of this most precious Psalm as being drawn from the daily life of a shepherd and his sheep, the words above seem to suggest the ending of a day's experiences. The sheep have all been led home and are safely sheltered in the fold. There would perhaps be no thought in David's mind in those days, when as a youth he tended his father's sheep, of associating those scenes of shepherd life with his own experiences in being led and cared for by Jehovah. Long years, however, passed by. The shepherd life had long since ceased. The shepherd lad had, in the Divine providence, become a king, and had grown old in the service of Jehovah and His people. He had passed through many and varied scenes of mingled joy and sorrow. As he looked back over the long years of his earthly pilgrimage, the memories of his shepherd life became vivid and fresh to his mind, and he is moved by inspiration to make use of his experiences in caring for his sheep to describe in song his own life of faith and trust in God-little thinking of the help, the comfort, the encouragement the words would be to the Lord's followers during the nearly thirty centuries of human history that have elapsed since. He no longer thinks of himself as the shepherd caring for the sheep, protecting them from danger, and supplying all their varied wants. The figure is reversed and he now thinks of himself as one of the sheep, that has all his life long been cared for by the Great Shepherd, Jehovah; and as his mind turns backward over the long years, and as he realizes how God's goodness and mercy have followed him; he endeavors to peer into the dim, unknown future, and with a confidence begotten of long experience, he says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the [remaining] days of my life."

It is only when we give close attention to these closing words of this most wonderful song of songs, that we fully realize that it must have been composed at a late period in David's life. They are the heart utterances of one who had experienced many of the trials and adversities as well as blessings that inevitably make up this life on earth; they express a maturity of experience not compatible with the earlier stages of the life of faith. That which is most apparent, however,, is the fact that the author of the Psalm had learned through these experiences the weakness of fallen human nature, and the need of Divine mercy and grace. He had

learned how to obtain this mercy and to find grace to help in his time of need. The words of the Psalm clearly show also that the writer realized the providence of Jehovah—he realized that he was being specially dealt with by Him; and that all the trials, adversities, and blessings were accomplishing a character development, fitting him for a future life. He was one of the "great cloud of witnesses" mentioned in Heb. 12:1; one of those who "endured as seeing Him who is in ,visible"; one of those who "died in the faith," and who will be rewarded in the "better resurrection."

TESTED AND PROVED THE SHEPHERD'S POWER

The words, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," as applied to the Lord's ' sheep of spiritual Israel, express the feelings and sentiments of those who have experienced a considerable measure of the blessedness of the "life that is hid with Christ in God"; they express the sentiments of those who have come in contact with the many trials and tribulations that lie in the narrow pathway that leads to life, to immortality -- the pathway that is marked by the footprints of the Good Shepherd, who trod the way before His sheep. These closing words of the Psalm, describe the experience of one who has learned good by coming in contact with evil, and who perhaps for a time was overcome by it. It describes the experience of one who, amid the varied scenes of human life, has fully tested and proved the Shepherd's power to deliver, as well as the Shepherd-graces -- the goodness and mercy of the Lord, of whom he sings. It seems very apparent that the words of this Psalm were first sung by one who had suffered deeply; one who had tasted of life's bitter, as well as of its sweet."

We are told in Persian story, of a vizier who dedicated one apartment in his palace to the memory of earlier days; ere royal caprice had lifted him from lowliness to honor. There, in a tiny room with bare floors, was the simple equipment of shepherd-life -- the crook, the wallet, the coarse dress, the water-cruze; and there he spent a part of each day, remembering what he had been, as an antidote to those temptations which beset men in the dazzling light royal or popular favor. So David the king did not forget David the shepherd boy. There was a chamber in his heart whither he was wont to retire to meditate and pray; and there it was that he composed this Psalm, in which the mature experience of his manhood blends with the vivid memory of a boyhood spent among the sheep."

The power to bless, to heal, to work deliverance, is expressed in the Psalm as coming, not from man, but from God. Indeed, every utterance of the Psalm tells us what God will do -- what He is doing for the soul that trusts, that confides in Him. The entire Psalm expresses the Divine providential overruling and care. Every sentence is an expression of the singer's trust and confidence in the great Jehovah God. David is speaking of a real experience, not beautiful, lofty ideal that can never be realized. He most firmly believed that the great Jehovah was deeply interested in all his affairs; that He was full of compassion for him; that He remembered in mercy the weaknesses of His fallen nature, and, that like as a father He pitied His children, even those who feared and desired to please Him.

SPEAKS OF INFINITE GOODNESS TO SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

The Psalm means even more to spiritual Israel than to "Israel after the flesh." To spiritual Israel of the Gospel Age, the Psalm speaks of the infinite goodness, the tender mercy, the long-suffering and patience of a loving Father. It teaches the blessed privilege of a life of faith, of intimate fellowship, and of daily communion with the great Shepherd. The words, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," describe a confidence and trust possessed by one who has learned to depend upon God, learned to yield the will to Him in the daily providences of life, learned to take Him at His Word and to "know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to the called according to His purpose."

The Psalmist says, "Surely *goodness* and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." How often does David link these two words together. "The Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting." One has said, "There never will come a day throughout all the future in which we shall not have the two guardian angels, heavenly escorts, and God-sent messengers, *Goodness and Mercy*, who have been told of and commissioned to attend the believer during all the days of his earthly pilgrimage. When, benumbed with cold, and bewildered with the mist which has suddenly settled down upon his track, the traveler across the highland moor sinks down exhausted on the drenched herbage, what an infinite comfort it is, through a momentary rent in the mist, to get a glimpse of a plaided figure of a shepherd close beside him; or to discover two servants from the distant-paternal home, sent out to scour the hills in search of the missing one, and to bring him safely to its shelter and warmth! But it is in some such way as this that the eye of the believer may detect, in moments of weariness and solitude, the presence of those twin angels of God -- *Goodness and Mercy*."

Goodness -- who can define it? Even when applied to man in dealing with his fellow it is difficult-yes, impossible to sum up all that is embodied in this one word. But it is God's goodness to imperfect ones who fear, reverence Him that David speaks of. Perhaps we can get a faint idea of its meaning when we consider that it comprehends in a figure everything done by the earthly shepherd for his own sheep -his supplying all their wants; his leading them into green pastures; his finding for them quiet waters to quench their thirst, and to rest beside; his leading them home; his tending specially to the needs of the tired, the wounded; and his furnishing shelter for them at night. The word "goodness" comprehends every thing in connection with the Lord's dealings with His sheep for their good. It exhibits His kindness, His benevolence, and benignity of heart manifested in His gifts of grace and correction and discipline. Goodness and Mercy -- not goodness only, but mercy as well. It may be truthfully said that the quality of mercy is comprehended in goodness, and yet mercy possesses a characteristic distinct in itself. Mercy is defined as that benevolence, mildness, tenderness, which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves. It is the disposition that tempers justice, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries and to forbear punishment, or inflict less than the law or justice will-warrant. It is said that in this sense there is perhaps no word in our

language precisely synonymous with mercy. That which comes the nearest to it is *grace*. It implies benevolence, tenderness, mildness, pity or compassion, and clemency, but exercised only to offenders. Mercy is a distinguishing attribute of God. "The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression and (yet) by no means clearing the guilty."

"HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF HIS KINDNESS"

Goodness and Mercy -- One has called them the celestial escort of the Christian on his journey to the New Jerusalem. Mercy is spoken of as "the daughter of God -- His delight 'He delighteth in Mercy'; His wealth -- 'He is, rich in mercy'; His throne -- 'I will commune with thee from off the mercy seat.'" They *follow* the sheep, while the shepherd always leads them. Goodness and Mercy are like the shepherd's watchdogs that bring up the rear. They constitute a rearguard, as it were, to protect against the wolves that sometimes follow in the rear: One who likens goodness and mercy to guardian angels has beautifully expressed the relationship these two attributes of God sustain to the Lord's sheep: "We have two strong helpers to lift us from tier to tier of the pyramid of life, keeping us from falling backward, whispering words of comfort, and placing strong hands under our arms in circumstances of difficulty and stumbling.

"In that word *follow*, it is possible that there is a suggestion that we are going away from God, and that He sends His goodness and mercy after us to call us back. It may be so. If a prodigal leaves a widowed mother for the sea, she never forgets him; her prayers and tears and loving thoughts follow him; and to win him back she sends out only the tenderest yearnings of a heart almost crushed. Even so with God and His own; they may wander from Him, but He follows them. He sets Goodness and Mercy on their track. Sometimes it seems as if disaster on disaster, stroke on stroke, pursues them; but it is not really *so*. Things are not always as they seem. And these are but the disguises which Goodness and Mercy assume; their outer garb, protecting the delicate woolen garments which are prepared for the weary head and tired limbs of the wearied, wandering, starved and ragged prodigal. He will not break off His kindness; nor suffer His faithfulness to fail; nor forsake the works of His hands; 'for His mercy endureth forever.' "

"*Surely*," His goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Does not the Psalmist speak too confidently? Some may say, It was all right for him, but it would hardly be proper for us to so speak. We refer such to St. Paul, who not only speaks for himself, but for all the Lord's followers: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy Sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as

sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." -- Rom. 8:31-39.

God's goodness and mercy will follow us all our days. We may, like David's sheep, wander from the path of righteousness; we may not appreciate, or we may neglect His loving-kindness and tender mercy; we may for a time ignore the presence of these guardian angels; we may even think that they are gone; but if we turn, we shall still find them there, with wistful longing looks, expressing their desires that we call upon them for help. "*Surely*" -- because He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"; "*surely*" -- because long and varied experiences have attested this to be a fact; "*surely*" -- because, as one has truthfully said, "if He has set His love on us in eternity, He is not likely to forget us in time. So surely shall never a day come in our earthly pilgrimage, in which God shall not be at our *side* in goodness and mercy." "He that hath begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end."

SAFE AT LAST IN THE HEAVENLY FOLD

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord, for ever." The shepherd song is finished; the sheep are all at rest -- safe in the good shepherd's fold. Home at last ! "What a magic power, there is in that word, *home*. It will draw the wanderer from the ends of the earth. It will nerve sailor, and soldier, and explorer to heroic endurance. It will melt with its dear memories the hardened criminal. It will bring a film of tears over the eyes of the man of the world."

"Be it ever so humble
There's no place like home."

As we review the words of this Psalm of Psalms, we see that it teaches that the lives of the Lord's sheep are full of changes. . The great and final "change" will soon be upon us, and we will then be ushered into our eternal Home. There can be no doubt that the changes of the present life are all needed to fit us for that heavenly Home and its occupations. This earthly house has in one sense ceased to be a home of the Christian. The words of the Christian poet, "I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home," have not ceased to be true.' As the Christian journeys through the many and varied scenes of this present life and draws near to its close, he begins to realize how brief it has been, and he more and more becomes conscious that this is not his home -- that it is only the "training house for the real life which awaits us when the last lesson is learned, and the school bell rings. But all that is, and has been, and shall be, is just completing our character, and adding finishing touches to our symmetry." The expression, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," reminds us not only of our future Home, but of the eternity of that Home also.

This expression comes nearest in its meaning to the Master's words, spoken when He was about to part with His beloved disciples: "In my Father's house are many mansions"--abodes, dwelling places, as some translate the word. It was a home, an eternal home that He went away to prepare for His beloved followers. Those who have come to better understand our heavenly Father's great Plan -- that it is designed in its further unfolding to make known His wonderful love to all the rest of mankind in His own due time -- have a much clearer conception of what is meant by the "place prepared for you," as well as of what the experiences and employments of that eternal Home will be, than others who have not yet had such knowledge imparted to them. These have come to see that heaven will be for the joint-heirs only, and that it will not be a place of inactivity, but that then the real life of service in its deeper sense will begin. This does not mean that there are no services here in our earthly state to perform, services of many kinds, but the services of the present life, while they bring comfort and help to others, are designed more to mould us into vessels, fit instruments for more effectual service over there.

SHALL SEE HIM FACE TO FACE

For those who become associated with Christ as joint-heirs in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem government, there will be the great and blessed service to perform of restoring, of bringing humanity into the knowledge and enjoyment of the Father's great love, and preparing them to enjoy an eternal home on a renewed earth. The "mansion" in the "Father's house" that is being prepared by the Divine Master for His footstep followers, whatever this word "mansion" may signify, will be on the Divine, heavenly, spirit plane of being. It will, in a much deeper sense, comprehend all the blessed fellowships, all the joys that make up, the happy homes here on earth, with nothing to disturb or mar its bliss. These enjoyments will begin with the great Home-gathering, which will be in the "First Resurrection," and will constitute the meeting together for the first time of all the Father's children, all the blood-washed company, in the mansion prepared for them in the Father's house.

This gathering is mentioned by the Apostle as the "general assembly of the Church of the firstborn ones whose names are written in heaven" into their everlasting dwelling, to go no more out forever. One of its greatest blessings will be to see Him face to face -- Him whom by faith we learned to love while here in our pilgrimage on earth--our Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep, who led us, who shepherded us, and who cared for us all the days of our journey thither. It will be then that we shall be made like Him. Many of us have experienced something of the enjoyments of home-gatherings here below, when after months, or perhaps years of separation, we meet as members of one family once again in the old homestead, of our childhood and youthful days. Such occasions sometimes take place in connection with the anniversary of the father or mother's natal day. First, perhaps, will come the boy from school who has been absent from home but a few months; then the one who for years has been a wanderer over the earth; and one by one the whole family are gathered to renew for a brief season the fellowships and joys of home associations, to meet father

and mother, to mingle again as an unbroken family. Ah, these are joyous occasions, happy reunions, precious seasons, but these occasions are transient-the separation moment soon comes, hearts are made sad, the farewells are said, and the reunion breaks up, perhaps never to meet as an unbroken family again. The inevitable changes of the present life come, and at the next gathering, there is a vacant chair; a loved one, -perhaps a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, has gone the way of all the earth, never more to meet in these earthly festivities. Or the next gathering may be to mingle their tears together in recent bereavement, to look into the pale silent features of a loved one most dear, and to follow the form with bowed heads and sad hearts to the silent city, of the dead.

Oh, how different will it be in that great Home-gathering beyond when we shall meet those we have fellowshiped with and learned to love, as we walked together and sought to assist one another in the Narrow Way that led to that eternal Home! Oh, what a gathering that will be when the last child has reached - the Father's Home, and the whole heavenly family meet and greet each other! Never again to part! Never again to break up the happy and glorious home festival!

WHAT A GATHERING OF THE FAITHFUL THERE WILL BE

Once we thought that, the joy and happiness of that gathering would be marred; once we thought others whom we loved and mingled with on 'earth, but who never entered the Narrow Way that led us to our heavenly Home, would be cut off forever from knowing of God's love, from realizing His favor. But now how different! Since we have been privileged to understand our Heavenly Father's plans and purposes better, and have learned that the gift of His well-beloved Son opened the way for the awakening of these from the sleep of death, opened the way for them to reunite again on earth, and opened the way for them to learn of the great unfathomable love of God, we have come to see that not the least of our joy will be to see these as the "ransomed of the Lord return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," to "obtain joy and gladness," and to realize that all sorrow and sighing have fled away forever. (Isa. 35:10) "Even on the earthly side, what reunion of hearts and exchanges of happy congratulations shall crown and crowd that glad day! What glorious meetings and triumphs will then be celebrated Earth has been the theatre of some splendid victories, the fame of which has filled the world and echoed along the corridors of ages. But never has earth witnessed such a triumph as shall occur on that day. Then shall be enacted another Genesis, more glorious than the first. Then shall be performed another Exodus, more illustrious than that which Moses led; then shall truth triumph over error, and faith over unbelief, humility over pride, life over death." Then shall God "wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death,, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any former more pain; for the things are passed away."

In closing this series of this most wonderful shepherd song, will it not be well for us to ask ourselves, Are we realizing the blessed privileges therein portrayed? In a very deep and important sense, the life we shall live and enjoy over there,

begins here in our life on earth. Heaven begins when we first come to know Him, who said, "In my Father's house there are many mansions... I go to prepare . a place for you." From the time that we first experience the blessing of forgiveness, of favor, and begin to walk in the narrow way of life, we may realize in a measure some of the experiences of the "Kingdom of God, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." As we make progress in following our Good Shepherd, as we grow older, and learn by experience in the walk of faith, the goodness and the mercy, the protection and, the loving care, the long suffering and the providential overruling of the Great Shepherd; as we , more and more realize when we look back over the way, that He has been with us all the days, sunny days, cloudy days, days of joy, days of sorrow, days of trial, days of toil, days of weariness, we are enabled with the sweet singer of Israel to say, "Surely goodness and mercy" shall follow me all the *remaining* days of my, life, . and when these changeful days are nearing their close, we can look forward to our change, and with confidence say, I shall enter that eternal Home -- "I will dwell in the house of the Lord *forever.*"

JOHN THE BAPTIST

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; For He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people." Luke 1:68 ; 3:3-8 ; 9 :24-28.

JOHN the Baptist was born in the days of Herod, the great king of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and the most important part of Perea. He evidently received an excellent heritage from his parents concerning whom we read that they were "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." It would be supposed that under such influence, John's . training would be only the best.

Quoting Peloubet's notes: "John's aged parents died before he grew to manhood, and he had no sister or brother. Left alone in the world, he went to the region most closely akin to his own stern and strong spirit, the .wild and barren country along the eastern stretch of the Judean uplands, where a succession of gaunt hills and deep ravines tumble down to the Dead Sea. Near Jerusalem and Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron, it was yet a land of solitude where John could think his great thoughts undisturbed, and draw close to God in constant prayer.

"Here John's life was simple in the extreme. He ate wild honey which he found in the rocky clefts, together with locusts, which are to this day prized in that region as an article of food. His garment reminds us of the shaggy mantle of Elijah, his prototype, for it was a coarse cloak of camel's hair thrown over his shoulders and confined at the waist by a strip of leather. His outdoor life bronzed his features and gave him the commanding power of perfect health."

We do not advocate that all the Lord's people follow *the* example of John the Baptist in respect to their food and raiment, but- we do believe that a good lesson of simplicity, consecration, and zeal may be drawn from his course We do believe that our Lord's faithful followers might copy John's example to the extent of

avoiding the extremes of social custom, not only in their clothing but also in their food. . We advocate "things decent" and "things honest," as the Apostle expresses the matter -- a simplicity of diet and wardrobe. Those who have consecrated their time and energy and influence to the Lord, and to the service of the Truth, will do well for their spiritual interests to be on guard against the fashions and follies of this world in these matters; and whether they eat or drink, *or* whatsoever they do or wear, that all may be done to the glory of the Lord -- with a view to their own greatest usefulness in the Divine service and in the service of the household of faith.

THE SPECIAL SCHOOLING OF THE PROPHET

Dean Farrar writing of John the Baptist has made some interesting observations: "St. John was a dweller in the wilderness, only that he might thereby become the prophet of the Highest. The light which was within him should . be kindled, if need be, into a self-consuming flame; not for His own glory, but that it might illuminate the pathway of the coming King.

"The nature of St. John the Baptist was full of impetuosity and fire. The long struggle which had given him so powerful a mastery over himself-which had made him content with self-obliteration before the presence of his Lord which, had inspired him with ,fearlessness in the face of danger, and humility in the midst of applause-had left its traces in-the stern character, and aspect, and teaching of the man. If he had won peace in the long prayer and penitence of his life in the wilderness, it was not the spontaneous peace of a placid and happy soul. The victory he had won was still encumbered- with traces of the battle; the calm he had attained still echoed with the distant mutter of the storm. His very teaching reflected the imagery of the wilderness -- the rock, the serpent; the barren tree.`In his manifestation and agency,' it has been said, `he was like a burning torch; his public life was quite an earthquake-the whole man .was a sermon; he might well call himself a voice -- the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' ... He had learned a language he had received a revelation, not vouchsafed to ordinary men-attained, not in the schools of the Rabbis, but in the school of solitude, in the school of God.

"Such teachers are suited for such times. There was. enough and to spare of those respectable, conventional teachers, who; spake smooth things and prophesied deceits. The ordinary Scribe or Pharisee, sleek with good living and supercilious with general respect, might get up in the synagogue, with his broad phylacteries and .luxurious robes,' and might, perhaps, minister to some sleepy edification with his *midrash* of hair-splitting puerilities and threadbare precedents; but the very aspect of John the Baptist would have shown that there was another style of teacher here. Even before the first vibrating tone of a voice that rang with scorn and indignation, the bronzed countenance, the unshorn locks, the close-pressed lips, the leathern girdle, the mantle of camel's hair, would at once betoken that here at last was a man who was a man indeed in all his natural grandeur and dauntless force, and who, like the rough Bedawy prophet who. was his antitype, would stand unquailing before purple Ahabs and adulterous Jezebels. And then

his life. was known. It was known that his drink was water of the river, and that he lived on locusts and wild honey. Men felt in him that power of mastery which is always granted to perfect self-denial. He who is superior to the common ambitions of man is superior also to their common timidities. If he have little to hope from the favor of his fellows he has little to fear from their dislike; with nothing to gain from the administration of servile flattery, he has nothing to lose by the expression of just rebuke. He sits as it were above his brethren, on a sunlit eminence of peace and purity, unblinded by the petty mists that dim their vision, untroubled by the petty influences that disturb their life.

"No wonder that such a man at once made himself felt as a power in the midst of his people. ' It became widely rumored . that, in the wilderness of Judea, lived one whose burning words it was worth while to hear; one who recalled Isaiah by his expressions. Elijah by his life."

John's mission was heaven-directed, and exactly at the right time to introduce the Lord Jesus to the Jewish nation, which had been waiting for him for centuries to fulfil in and through their nation the promise made, to Abraham, "In thy seed -hall all the families of the earth be blessed." Under Divine guidance the affairs of Israel were, outwardly at least, more prosperous than they had been for centuries, and they were as ,a nation hoping that this return of God's favor might culminate in the sending of the promised King for- the exaltation of their nation, and through its establishment in ,power the blessing of Israelitish rule in the name of the Lord should be extended to; all the families of the earth. We. are told that amongst the Jews "all men were in expectation of the Messiah." -- Luke 3:15

HIS WORDS LIKE A FLAME

No wonder then that so striking a figure as John the Baptist made an impression when he announced that God's Kingdom was soon to be established, and that he had been sent as an advance minister to proclaim it and to sanctify the hosts of Israel, that they might be prepared to be the hosts of the Messiah in the fulfillment of the long-expected promise to Abraham. By a new method those who accepted John's teaching were required to mark their reformation of life, namely by an -immersion of water, which symbolized their putting away, of sin, their return to full covenant relationship with God, already established through Moses, the mediator of the Law Covenant.

Quoting again from the same writer: "Whatever might be the class who flocked to his stern solitude, his teaching was intensely practical, painfully .heart-searching, fearlessly downright. And so Pharisee and Sadducee, scribe and soldier, priest and publican, all thronged to listen to his words. The place where, he preached was that wild range of uncultivated and untenanted wilderness, which stretches southward from Jericho and the forts of Jordan to the . shores of the Dead Sea. The cliffs that overhung the narrow defile which led from Jerusalem to Jericho were the haunt of dangerous robbers; the wild beasts and the crocodiles were not yet extinct in the reed-beds that-marked the swellings of Jordan; yet from every quarter of the country -- from priestly Hebron, from holy Jerusalem, from smiling Galilee -- they came streaming forth, to catch the accents of this strange voice.

And the, 'Words of that voice were like a hammer to dash in pieces the flintiest heart, like a flame to pierce into the most hidden thoughts.

"But he had another and stranger message -- a message sterner, yet more hopeful - to deliver; for himself he would claim no authority save as the forerunner of another; for his own baptism no value, save as an initiation into the Kingdom that was at hand. When the deputation from the Sanhedrin asked him who he was -- when all the people were musing in their hearts whether he were the Christ or no - he never for a moment hesitated to say that he was not the Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet. He was 'a voice in the wilderness,' and nothing more; but after him -- and this was the announcement that stirred most powerfully the hearts of men--after him was coming One who was preferred before him, for He was before him -- One whose shoe's latchet he was unworthy to unloose -- One who should baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Ghost, and with fire -- One whose fan was in His hand, and who should thoroughly purge His floor -- who should gather His wheat into the garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. The hour for the sudden coming of their long-promised, long-expected Messiah was at hand. His awful presence was near them, was among them, but they knew Him not."

Though many of the disciples of Jesus were previously disciples of John, nevertheless the majority of those baptized by John evidently had not been touched to the heart by his preaching, but merely nominally repented and instituted some slight reform.

The movement became a popular one, and drew to it many who loved publicity and notoriety, and who are always foremost in the promise of godliness but are without its power, therefore without the sincerity, without the heart interest.

Continued in next issue