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The Angels' Message

"For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." - Luke 2:10

OF ALL the proclamations found in, the blessed Book that we so much love, and which is replete with utterances of hopeful assurance from cover to cover, there are but few that sound it exultant notes of unqualified delight as does this announcement made by those angelic messengers that hovered over the Judean fields on that night of almost two thousand years ago, In one respect the message differs from the great majority of those sent through the medium of the Prophets of old and which were for the most part couched in terms of stern reproof; warning, or admonishment addressed to typical people of Israel. That such givings the need hardly be wondered at in view of Israel's repeated failure to earn divine approval. The wonder rather is that the Most High, dwelling in those realms of awful purity and holiness, should have condescended to show so much mercy and forbearance through long ages of time towards a sin-stained and rebellious people which had constantly flouted his righteous authority and ignored his repeated appeals to their divinely instructed reason. (Isa. 1:18) But this proclamation is different. It stands almost alone in its unequivocal expression of joyous satisfaction on the part of the angels at being; made the heralds of such a glorious announcement, one that meant almost as much to the messengers as it did to the recipients; for have we not learned of the intense and delighted interest which the angels have manifested repeatedly in every phase and detail of the handiwork of Him that "sitteth between the cherubim." - Psa. 99:1; Job 38:7.

This message may be compared in scope only to that joyous declaration of John, when in prophetic vision he became conscious of the great chorus of praise from every living creature in heaven and earth as they hailed the glorious culmination of the complete plan of salvation: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." It was as if the Father himself with all the angels were breathing a great sigh of relief at the successful completion of this great, step in the wondrous undertaking. The great Logos had now been made flesh. The gift of God's only begotten Son had been bestowed upon the world (John 3:16), and the Father was inviting all creation to share in his joy. Ignored for the moment were the long years of trial and suffering that lay ahead for that Infant so peacefully sleeping in the manger at Bethlehem. Ignored were the obstacles that had to be overcome before the forces of darkness and death would be finally and forever destroyed. Nothing at this time must be permitted to interfere with the fulness of joy that possessed the heart

of the Father and that the angels seemed to, be striving to communicate to those humble shepherds who were staring in speechless amazement at the spectacle which was being unfolded before them, scarcely daring to believe what their eyes saw and what their ears heard.

Most of us remember the frenzied joy with which this nation and the whole allied world received the news of the unconditional surrender of their enemies and the end of the war. Over the radio was carried the sound of the shouts of joy and relief which came from every corner of the land as the people danced and paraded all night in the streets. Forgotten were the years of doubt and fear and suffering that had made the coming of the morning mail a dreaded event. All that was now in the past, and all prospects for the future were joyous ones. Yet that was but a poor, pale reflection of that glorious celebration of the future which the Revelator saw, and which will entail no disappointing aftermath such as has been the case with all human celebrations.

It may perhaps have been the prospect of that universal joy that filled the hearts of the angels with thankfulness and praise that night as they invited the shepherds to share in their rejoicing. It may safely be assumed that their knowledge of the trying events that lay in the future was not any more complete than is ours. We know not what awaits us, God kindly veils our eyes. They could not have known how much suffering, had yet to be borne before the prophecy to Joseph (Matt. 1:21) was fulfilled, and that holy Infant, grown to manhood, would complete the task of saving his people from their sins. For the moment they gave free rein to the joy which they shared with the mighty Author of the Plan. Their full confidence in his power and wisdom had been amply justified, and they rejoiced before him in praise and adoration, while we also who "see through a glass darkly" are even now able to catch something of the thrill of that moment. For the joy they felt was to extend to *all people*. Not to any one class; not merely to the nation to which by fleshly lineage the babe belonged; no, not even to those favored ones alone who will share in his glory or to that great multitude whose tears of chagrin will be wiped away as they are led to living fountains of waters (Rev. 7:17), evermore to rejoice. No, the words are all-inclusive and unqualified; the joy is to be to all people. Many of us who have felt disappointment at our failure to touch hearts we have never been able to reach with the message that means so much to us can also rejoice at the certain prospect that every ear will eventually hear those glad tidings of great joy. For "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Perhaps some may cavil at the thought of the Almighty experiencing anything like a feeling of relief, thus implying that he might have felt at some time what in a human would be anxiety. It is undeniably true that no possible doubt as to the ultimate success of his every plan would ever find a place in the mind of the omnipotent God of the Universe, he who knows the end from the beginning. Yet it seems to us that he could not be the loving and compassionate Father of whom the Son was an exact mental image unless he experienced a feeling of loving sympathy and compassion for that loved Son in the ordeal of suffering and death through which he must pass ere he could redeem our race and become the Captain of our Salvation.

A PICTURE FROM THE PAST

An analogy in the Old Testament which should serve to illustrate what God must have felt is that one which is recorded in Genesis 22 where we read that Abraham was called upon to give up in sacrifice his son Isaac, the beloved heir to all his possessions, the one in whom all his hopes were centered and the one whom he regarded as the medium through which all the divine promises were to be fulfilled. Many of us have discovered that in our experiences with the troubles of life, the anticipation of a coming ordeal frequently bears down more heavily upon our spirits and is a greater test to our courage than is the trouble itself when the time comes for us to face it. Our dear Master himself was affected in this same manner, for did he not say "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." The story of Abraham's sacrifice

is told by the narrator in plain, unembellished language, with no attempt made to play upon our emotions. Yet one would have to be dull and unimaginative indeed if he failed to visualize something of the anxious strain which must have wrung Abraham's heart as he looked forward in dread to the completion of that terrible three days journey and the ordeal through which he must pass. (Gen. 22:3, 4) Abraham may have, and probably did possess an almost supernatural degree of faith in order to enable him to make that fearful decision, always trusting that God would in some mysterious way overrule the matter for the best. But even that complete trust could not have prevented that journey from being an inexpressibly painful one to the heart of the Father. And so likewise it must have been an equally distressing prospect for our Heavenly Father to look forward to, knowing that at the end of those three thousand-year days, he must voluntarily sacrifice his dearest treasure for the sake of sinful man. So, it is our conviction that he must have breathed a great sigh of relief when that first crucial step had been taken, the only begotten Son had left his heavenly home, and had been made flesh in the person of that holy Infant who lay in the manger at Bethlehem.

The immensity of God's love for his estranged children had now been demonstrated to both angels and men, as it is written that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) And a still greater degree of relief was to be the Father's portion when, some thirty-three years later, he received back from the dead that same dear Son with the sacrifice successfully accomplished, and the victory won. The joyous relief that Abraham must have felt when he received Isaac figuratively from the dead (Heb. 11:19) should enable us to apprehend something of the Heavenly Father's joy on that glorious occasion, just as the knowledge of that wondrous transaction has brought joy and gratitude to our own hearts.

But at the time of the announcement by the angels of the Savior's birth all these events were still in the future. For the present it was joy enough for the angels to proclaim the glad tidings to those humble shepherds: "Unto you is born today in the city of David a Savior who is the Lord Messiah." (*Diaglott.*) And then came the full chorus of the heavenly host, voicing their joy and adoration in a great paean of praise to the mighty One who was the author of the whole glorious Plan: "Glory to God in the highest heavens."

Concerning the second part of the angelic hymn of praise there has been much difference of opinion about the exact wording between the various translators. One version renders the passage, "On earth peace, and among men, good will." To the writer, that translator seems to have entirely missed the real point of the angels' declaration. There was at that time neither peace nor good will among men in general, nor has there been since, any such satisfactory condition, as the state of the world today gives ample evidence; nor can there ever be peace and good will *among* men until the time comes when God's spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh (Acts 2:17), and when men will gladly submit to the beneficent rule of Messiah. Only then will universal peace prevail. Until that much to be desired day comes, all "peace" conferences, however well intentioned, must merely end in armistice -- a mere temporary truce. Men can never have true peace among themselves until first they have peace with God. Then, just in proportion as they draw near to him, they will also draw near to each other in mutual good will and friendship.

The glad tidings that filled the angels' hearts with rejoicing that night was the announcement that a new way had been found whereby peace could be established between God and man, a peace based upon the justifying work of the One who was to save his people from their sins. Up to that moment the only members of Adam's race who had been privileged to enter into a condition of peace with God were, first, his faithful servants of past dispensations who in the ages that had preceded the Mosaic era had like Abraham believed God and so were accounted righteous (James

2:23); and secondly, those Israelites who, by virtue of the yearly Atonement Day sacrifices, had obtained a standing of typical justification before God. All others were regarded as being at enmity with God, aliens and strangers from the covenants of promise. - Eph. 2:12.

But now, in the coming to earth of the Savior, the first step had been taken whereby "he that believeth in the Son" might have peace with God and have the divine good will extended to him that he might continue on and ultimately enter into full family relationship with the Most High, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." (Eph. 3:15.) This is the sense of the message as rendered in the Authorized Version and is to be preferred (in the mind of the writer, at least) to some of the more recent versions.

And what a gracious gift it was! No wonder that the thought of giving characterizes the Christmas season. It is at this time of year, even more perhaps than at any other, that the hearts of those who have learned the old, old story of the Father and his love should overflow in gratitude toward the Giver of every good and perfect gift as they reflect upon his great mercy to the children of men and upon the love that drew us to him.

"Peace with God." The mind of the uninstructed natural man finds it difficult to understand what those words mean to those who have tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the Age to come. (Heb. 6:5.) Fallen man has become through the ages so accustomed to his condition of estrangement from the Author of his being that he fails to appreciate his loss or to realize that this is not man's normal state. To the instructed mind, peace and harmony with God implies a condition of peace and serenity of mind which is the most precious of treasures to those who possess it and who esteem it dearer than life itself. It is a peace which is quite independent of all outside circumstances and conditions, and is frequently possessed by those to whom life is a continuous ordeal of physical suffering. It may be plainly manifest in the bearing of some who have to exist in conditions of direst poverty and hardship and who have apparently nothing that makes life worth living. And contrariwise, to those who lack that inner peace and contentment of mind, all the good things of life and all material wealth become valueless. Some twenty-five or thirty years ago, there occurred in the United States a large number of suicides, committed strangely enough by young people who were standing on the very threshold of life with all its possibilities yet unexplored, but who still complained that their existence had lost all thrill for them. They had, so they said, exhausted all that life had to offer in the way of pleasurable excitement, and feared the future promised but a dull, drab monotony, the prospect of which they found unendurable. Here then was a tragic commentary upon the mental state of those who had learned so little of the true meaning of life that, when the self-pampering pleasures of the world palled upon their taste, they had nothing left which could reconcile them to what they considered to be the dull, uninspiring business of living.

Consider in contrast the case of the Patriarch Job. Under the buffetings of Satan he had been reduced to penury and forced to endure every form of bodily discomfort. His own wife could see so little hope for him that she urged him to "curse God and die." As if this were not misery enough, his three best friends charged him with being guilty of some concealed sin which had brought upon him divine displeasure. Throughout all his troubles job had nothing left to console him but his consciousness of his own innocence and his complete trust in the integrity and justice of the Most High. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not receive evil?" was his defense of the honor of God. "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him, but I will maintain mine own ways before him." (Job 13:15.) In other words Job had peace with God and therefore a peaceful mind. As Paul puts it, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6), and in job's case it compensated him for all his sufferings.

This was the promised peace which was destined to come to earth, of which the angels sang that night so long ago, one which, unlike any mere man-made peace; would ultimately reach all the families of the earth as God's good will extended toward all men. Yes, a way had been found whereby he might be just and still the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. (Rom. 3:26.) And in spite of the sad state of the world as we approach this Christmas of 1946, those who have trusted in the heavenly vision know that it will not lie. (Hab. 2:3.) These know that peace like a river will yet extend from Jerusalem to all the Gentiles. - Isa. 66:12.

WHAT CHRISTMAS SHOULD MEAN TO US

How should the "Truth people" regard the Christmas festival? Let us disregard for the time being a chronological fact of which most Bible Students are aware, namely, 'that the actual time of year upon which our Lord's First Advent as the man-child of Bethlehem occurred corresponded more closely to about the first of October than it did to the twentyfifth of December, a matter which we need not go into at this time, and let us consider for a moment, the significance of the event from the standpoint of the human family as a whole.

If in the esteem of those who through divine grace have been granted power to become sons of God (John 1:12) there be one anniversary in the Christian calendar which more than any other prompts them to especially rejoice, it is that one which commemorates our Lord's birth as a new creature on that resurrection morning which succeeded his three days burial. In the larger, more comprehensive sense that great event was of equal importance to all mankind, for it was then that he became the firstfruits of them that slept, human and spiritual alike. (1 Cor. 15:20.) But the Easter season is in a very special sense the particular festival of the new creation, of which he was the first-born member, and so his resurrection verified and made certain the hopes of those "who first trusted in Christ." - Eph. 1:12.

However, the Glad Tidings of great joy which we commemorate at the Christmas season, as has been already pointed out, were to be to all the world's people. So, accordingly, we rejoice in company with all the world at the good news concerning the birth of the Savior at Bethlehem. The more we learn of and strive to copy the Master's character and to become imbued with his spirit, the greater becomes our inclination to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15); in other words the broader and deeper become our own sympathies with the whole groaning creation. We are well aware that the present time is a period of fear and anxiety, which bears down heavily upon the entire world. Ominous signs are pointing to a great judgment upon the whole of Christendom, as every news dispatch reveals. If then we can aid in distracting the minds of the harmless and well-meaning people of our world even temporarily from these dark portents by joining in the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the Christ-child, let us participate gladly and thankfully. What better cause for rejoicing could there be than a precious season which gladdens and enlarges the hearts of mankind and which distributes its genial warmth among those whom he came to save! We remember that the Lord while in the flesh once graced with his presence a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee and contributed to the festivities by performing his first miracle in response to his mother's unspoken request in regards to the wine, even though, as he explained, his hour (for relaxation and enjoyment) had not yet come. (John 2:4.) And what an ordeal of suffering he had to endure before that hour arrived, when with his disciples he partook of the new wine (life) in the Kingdom! - Matt. 26:29.

Our friends in the great denominations of Christendom also, those who in a sense apprehend something of the meaning of Christmas and the song of the angels as they prophesied of the coming peace and good will to men, these realize but little of the fiery experiences through which

mankind must pass before the Sin-offering has been completely made, humanity released from the death sentence, and the work of him who is to save his people from their sins has been finished. The knowledge of the chronological features of the Plan that we have been permitted to acquire gives us assurance that even now the "strong man's house" is being broken up and Satan is beginning to lose the power that he has wielded so long, to deceive the nations. Ere long the Kingdom of the saints of the Most High (Dan. 7:27) will exercise its beneficial rule over mankind so conclusively that men will begin to understand that "the former things have forever passed away." How glorious will be their awakening to the fact that the new Ruler of earth is that same wise, gentle, and loving Jesus, the anniversary of whose birth they have been celebrating for so long at every Christmas season.

OUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH

And what of us highly favored ones who long ago discovered what peace with God could mean, we who have found a refuge in the secret place of the Most High? Does that peace which our Lord promised (John 14:27) still possess, our hearts and minds? The inspired Psalmist once uttered these words concerning the City of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: . . . Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Psa. 46:5, 2.) The indications are that ere long we may witness those conditions of which the Psalmist spoke. Even now men's hearts are failing them for fear of the coming tempest of trouble, and we would unquestionably share that fear had we not laid hold upon the promises of the Word. But praise God, his truth has been and still is our shield and our buckler. (Psa. 91:4.) So then let us at this Christmas season be strong and of a good courage, for the Lord thy God doth go with thee. "He will not fail thee nor forsake thee." (Deut. 31:6.) Let us participate with thankful hearts in the celebration of the Christmas season. Let that confidence and assurance which the Lord has bestowed upon us impel us to speak words of cheer and encouragement to those whose ears have not yet become attuned to an appreciation of the true meaning of the angelic proclamation of "peace on earth, good will to men."

- J. R. Hughes.

The Three Parables Uttered by Christ at Matthew's Feast

"Who do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" - Matt. 9:14.

BEFORE CONSIDERING the parables themselves, it will be helpful to note the conditions which led our Lord to give them expression. They were uttered at the feast which Matthew, either in the evening of the same day on which he had been called to be a disciple, or shortly thereafter, had prepared in our Lord's honor. - Luke 5:33-39; Mark 2:18 22; Matt. 9:9-17.

There was no lack of conversation at Matthew's table. Besides the publicans (that is to say, tax collectors) and sinners (those who made no religious claims or professions) who reclined with him, there lounged in the court outside the room, or even in the room itself, many neighbors whom the customs of the East permitted to add themselves, uninvited, to the company. Among these were certain Pharisees, and their scribes, rabbis, and doctors of the law, who had already been worsted in their dispute with Christ when he healed the man who was sick of the palsy (Matt. 9:1-8); certain also of their ardent young disciples. Some of the disciples of John the

Baptist were there too. Among these bystanders there arose a discussion, a discussion which was mainly an adverse criticism. The discussion turned on eating and drinking, as was natural at a least, and various issues were raised, as for instance, whether it was not better to fast than to feast; and, with whom was it lawful to eat.

The Pharisees did not approve of eating with "publicans and sinners"; but with a certain awe of Jesus, and remembering how he had previously discomfited them, when he had forgiven the paralytic his sins and cured his palsy, they first put their disapproval into the form of a question, and then asked the question of his disciples, not venturing to ask it directly of him. To their question: "Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners?" his disciples not being ready with an answer, our Lord made a threefold reply. First he cited a well known proverb: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Next he advised them to learn the real significance of the Scripture found in Hosea 6:6, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice"; and finally he gave them a distinct declaration of the object and character of his mission: "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners."

BIGOTRY AND HOW TO MEET IT

No sooner is the question, "Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners?" answered than another is raised, raised first, probably, by the disciples of the Baptist. They object, not so much to the company in which Jesus sits; for they cannot forget that the Baptist himself called publicans and sinners to repentance (Luke 3:12); but they are amazed that he, to whom John gave witness, should sit at a well spread table, and partake of sumptuous fare. *That* was not like the Baptist. He lived in a wilderness, on locusts and wild hony. Was it right, was it kind, that One whom John loved so well should feast when John was in prison? Was not fasting always better than feasting? Was it not much more suitable and becoming in view of the times of stress through which they were passing?

The mistake which these men made was a mistake which has been repeated many times since, a mistake which, we trust, all of our readers as well as ourselves, seek to avoid. It was the mistake of making themselves the standard by which all others were to be measured, and not only measured but condemned. Even Jesus, it seems, must come under their censure if his thoughts were higher than their thoughts, his ways broader than theirs. "*We* do this or that; *we* think thus and so; why don't you?. We will lay our ban on you if you don't" -- this has been the cry of the bigot in all ages and generations. "*We* do not see this feasting to be right, and therefore it must be wrong." We cannot too carefully guard ourselves against being infected by this self-righteous and intolerant temper which must be a thousandfold more base and wicked than any errors of thought sincerely held. Christ was in the right, though "we and the Pharisees" thought him wrong.

When we meet a bigot, we are tempted to meet him in a temper as arrogant and as self-sufficient as his own. Let us therefore the more carefully mark how the Lord Jesus met these austere bigots of the law. Their objection lay against the new tone which he seemed to be giving, and really was giving, to the religious life of men. They held that religion demanded a rigid and austere life; that it enjoined fasting, abstinence from comfort and joy -- in one word, asceticism. Their real complaint against Christ was that he was departing from this conception of religion. What they meant was: "You are giving a festal tone to life. You rejoice with those that rejoice, as well as weep with those that weep. You do not fast and make your disciples fast. You go to a marriage feast as readily as to a house of mourning. You even feast with sinners, who should do nothing but bewail their sins, and their exclusion from our synagogues. You give an added joy, and the sanction of *your* presence, to *their* festivities."

To all of which our Lord replies by three exquisite parables: the parable of the bridegroom and the bridechamber; the parable of the old garment with a new patch; and the parable of the new wine poured into old wineskins.

PARABLE OF THE BRIDECHAMBER

First of all he speaks the parable of the bridechamber. "Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" "Can the friends of the bridegroom be gloomy and mournful when he is about to be married?" This figure of a bridegroom is one of the most precious to be found in the Scriptures. As all are aware, it is used in the New Testament to denote the bonds of love and affection which unite our Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom, to the Church of this Gospel Age. As St. Paul, writing to the Church of Corinth declares: "I have espoused" [or betrothed] you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2.) And how the true lovers of Jesus long for the time to come when they shall experience the consummation of their hopes, and go in with him to the marriage-feast, entering fully and for ever into the joys of their Lord!

In the passage before us, however, Jesus was not presenting himself as the betrothed Bridegroom of the Church. There was no spirit-begotten Church to whom he could be betrothed when he spoke these words at Matthew's feast. Not until after he had given his life for her sake; not until he had been raised from the dead by the Father's power; not until he had ascended on high, there, at the Father's right hand, to appear in his presence on her behalf; not until the waiting followers of Jesus received the holy spirit on the day of Pentecost, was there even the nucleus of a Church to whom, as a spirit being, he could be betrothed. Then, indeed, it was, on the day of Pentecost, when the holy spirit was given, that our heavenly Bridegroom betrothed the Gospel Church to himself, in love.

JEWISH BRIDE REJECTS BRIDEGROOM

But the figure of the bridegroom had been used in the Old Testament of Jehovah and his relationship to the Jewish Church or nation. When Christ came, He came as the Father's representative, to claim this Jewish Church for his own. "And his own," we read, "received him not." - John 1:11.

From *this* standpoint, this brief parable, quite apart from the beauty and interest it has for us, had a special force both for the disciples of the Pharisees and for the followers of the Baptist. The Pharisees held by the "Law and the Prophets." And the Prophets had spoken of a coming Bridegroom who should betroth Israel unto himself "in righteousness and in loving-kindness and in mercies," who, though her "Maker," should become her "Husband" and "Redeemer." (Isa. 62:5; Hos. 2:19, 20; Isa. 54:5.) Their own rabbis had pronounced this "Bridegroom" to be the Messiah, and had foretold, "All fasting shall cease in the days of Messias; there shall only be holidays and festivals, joy and gladness and cheerful feasts." So that, by his brief parable, our Lord was recalling their own Prophets and rabbis to the minds of the Pharisees. He was announcing himself as the expected "Bridegroom" and "Messiah" and showing them how even their own teachers had foreseen that the sons of the bridechamber, the companions of the Bridegroom, should not fast in his day, but hold holiday and festival, with joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.

THE BAPTIST'S FAITHFUL WITNESS

In like manner the parable had special meaning and force for the disciples of John. *They* held by *their* master's words. To them the Baptist was the last and greatest of the Prophets. And when the Baptist saw all men flocking to Jesus, he had said to his disciples: "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice; this, my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." - John 3:28, 29.

The disciples of John could hardly fail to recall their master's words as they listened to the parable of Christ. And as they recalled them, they would see how even the austere, ascetic Baptist had claimed, as a son of the bridechamber, to rejoice greatly, while the Bridegroom was with him. And if he could do so, why could not they also?

Obviously there was a special force in the parable for both sets of critics. It referred the disciples of the Pharisees to Hebrew prophecies of a coming Messiah and Bridegroom, anointed with the oil of *joy* above his fellows, in whose days all fasting would cease; and it referred the disciples of the Baptist to the teaching and example of the Baptist himself to *his* prophecy of a Bridegroom, and his great joy as long as he stood and heard the Bridegroom's voice. So that, in place of meeting these austere and narrow-hearted critics in a temper as narrow and arrogant as their own, our Lord Jesus adopted their standards, condescended to their modes of thought, and sought to convince them *out of their own Scriptures* -- leaving us once again, an example, that we should *thus*, as well as in all other respects, seek to follow in his steps.

TRUE FASTING BY GOSPEL CHURCH

But there is a deeper meaning in his next words, a meaning which neither the disciples of the Pharisees, nor the Baptist's disciples could grasp. As long as they have the Bridegroom with them, the children of the bridechamber cannot fast. *That* they were beginning to understand. "But the days will come," he continues, "when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. In these words it is evident that our Lord is thinking of the experiences of the true Gospel Church, of which the Jewish Church was but typical. Some of these disciples of his, members of the Jewish Church, would be transferred to the Gospel Church, and others would believe on him through their word, all down through the Gospel Age. Throughout these centuries he, their betrothed, would be absent. Now fasting is always associated with sorrow and trial, and as at times the long delay on the part of the Bridegroom would cause the heart of the waiting Church to grow sick and discouraged, she might well fast and doubtless would. But no one would need to urge this on her. It would not be a rite or ceremony imposed on the Church at certain solemn seasons, but the expression of a real sentiment of grief and weariness. It would proceed from the sorrow which the Church would feel in the absence of her Bridegroom, and is designed to lend intensity to her prayers and to insure with greater certainty that assistance of Jesus (the holy spirit in rich measure) which alone can supply the place of his visible presence. - Mark 9:29; Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23.

PARABLE OF THE OLD GARMENT WITH THE NEW PATCH

To the parable of the bridechamber our Lord adds the parable of the old garment with the new-patch. "No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old and the rent is made worse."

In this second parable our Lord again condescends to the imperfections of his critics, that he may lead them to think more accurately, and with a broader vision, of him, and of the work he has come to do. He states the view of the Law and of the Gospel which *they* (not he) held. To *them*,

the Law was an old cloak, a religious garb, which they had long worn, and their fathers before them. They had honestly tried (at least some of them had) to clothe themselves in the righteousness which is by the Law. To a large extent its precepts had shaped their lives. Still, its ordinances were, for the most part, ordinances of outward observances, which had not vital, or vitalizing power. It could not, as St. Paul found out by bitter experience, give life. It was not graven on their hearts, but only on their phylacteries and door-posts -- on the hem of their garments. It did not touch, quicken, and renew their spirits; it was a mere robe, concealing rather than removing, the deformities and pollutions of their moral nature.

They did not themselves deny that it was an *old* cloak, getting somewhat thin and threadbare by long use. They were willing to have it patched; they were even trying to patch it themselves. The Pharisees, besides supplementing the written law by oral tradition, were willing to take a few hints from the teaching of John the Baptist. The disciples of the Baptist, though as a rule they did not become Christian, were willing to take a few hints from the teaching and example of Christ. They cut out a shred here and a shred there from the Gospel fabric, and were sewing them on to their old garment, the Law. But this feasting in Matthew's house perplexed them.

They could not tell what to make of it -- how to use it. It did not fit into any rent, or match with any texture, of their hereditary cloak. They were willing to take from Christ any form or custom which would make the Law more perfect or more suitable to the times; but this feasting with tax collectors and sinners -- what could they make of it? *This* would not give an added air of austerity or sanctity to their lives. It would neither make them more righteous, nor even give them a wider reputation for righteousness. It might even lessen the reputation they had. How could *this* patch be wrought in upon their old garment?

For their instruction our Lord adopts their view. Virtually he says to them: "You regard the law of Moses as an old cloak, a religious garb, rather than a religious life-form rather than spirit. And for you, this Gospel of mine is simply a new cloak, a new religious garb, another series of outward forms. Be consistent, then. Do not spoil both cloaks by cutting a piece out of the new and sewing it on to the old. The new will not match with the old. The patch of new, - undressed, unfulled, cloth, sure to shrink when once it is wetted, will pull away from the frayed threads of the shrunk and long-worn garment, and the rent will grow worse than ever. Either wrap yourselves, as best you may, in the scanty folds of your ancient and tattered cloak, or fling that away, and accept in its place the new cloak, which, you are supposing, I have come to offer men."

PARABLE OF THE NEW WINE AND THE OLD WINESKINS

Having thus taken their view, Jesus proceeds to give them his own view of both Law and Gospel in a third parable, the parable of the new wine and the old wineskins. To him, the Law was like old wine rather than like an old cloak -- wine which had not been without its refreshment and cheer to those who honestly sought to regulate their lives by it, even though it could never give them life; and the Gospel, so far from being a new cloak, a covering to be put on, was a new wine, a new vivifying spirit, to be put within men, making them strong and glad.

The wineskins, it would seem, would answer to the representatives of these two principles -- the Law and the Gospel. The Scribes and Pharisees at this time were sitting in Moses' seat. They were not divinely appointed to this service, but our Lord does not blame them for undertaking to instruct the people in reference to the mind and purposes of God, so long as they did not assume too much in consequence of what they were doing, and if they were consistent in themselves, conforming their conduct inner and outer, to the precepts of Moses and the instructions of the Prophets. But this they did not do, but, as our Lord stated, they "bound heavy burdens, and

grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, but they themselves did not move them with one of their fingers."

SELECTION OF NEW WINESKINS

These were the representatives of the Law, at the time of Christ. They were the wineskins in which the old wine of the Law, sadly diluted by the precepts and commandments of men, was contained. The new wine of the Gospel represents the life-giving message which was to flow so abundantly through the teachings of Jesus. And the wineskins were the men who were to become the depositaries of this message, who were to preserve it for mankind. And whom, in Israel, will Jesus choose to fulfil this mission? The old practitioners of the Law? Pharisees puffed up with the idea of their own merit? Rabbis jaded with textual discussions? No, indeed! Such persons have nothing to learn, nothing to receive, from him. If associated with his Gospel, they would not fail to falsify it, by mixing up with his pure teaching, the old prejudices with which they were imbued; or even if they should yield their hearts, for a moment, to the lofty ideals of Jesus, it would put all their previous views and routine devotion utterly to rout, just as new and sparkling wine bursts a worn-out leathern or skin bottle. Where, then, shall he choose his future instruments? Among those who have neither merit nor wisdom of their own. He needs new wineskins, wineskins that will be able to stand the stress of the fermentation sure to come. He needs fresh souls, whose only merit is their receptivity, new men in Christ, new creatures in Christ Jesus. "God," prayed he on one occasion, "I thank thee, because thou hast hidden these things front the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes." (Luke 10:21.) These babes will save the truth, and it will save them. This thought is expressed in the words "new wine must be put into new bottles, and both [that is, both wine and wineskins] are preserved."

TRUTH OF GOSPEL CANNOT BE RESTRAINED

In other words our Lord teaches them that it would be worse than useless to endeavor to restrain, within the limits of their traditions and ritualisms, the powers and graces of the new life which he came to bestow. *That* life could not endure to be confined within limits so narrow, by restraints so feeble. It would rend them asunder. The new wine must be put into new skins.

Fast! Of course, under appropriate circumstances. But his disciples should neither fast nor feast by rule, in deference to mere customs, however antique and venerable, which did not naturally express their inward life. They should be fettered by no ancient law graven on stones or inscribed on parchments, but should simply act out the laws of the life implanted by the Gospel in their hearts. While he, the Bridegroom, was with them, it was natural and right that they should make Merry and be glad; when he was taken away, it would be natural and right that they should mourn and fast. Let them in each case, in every case, follow the impulse of their renewed spirits. For himself and for them, he claimed freedom; freedom of thought, of emotion, of action. Austere, ascetic John the Baptist is not their ideal, still less the Pharisee, however learned, and punctilious. They are to honor, not a hermit, nor a ritualist, but a Man, the Man Christ Jesus. *He* is to be their ideal, and they are to serve him *as their hearts prompt* in perfect liberty. He is their life, and his life in them may be safely left to manifest itself in all innocent, comely, and appropriate forms.

It is a question here, then, of the preservation of the Gospel, and of the salvation of the individuals who are to be the depositaries of it. The old wineskins, men such as these carping, criticizing, Pharisees and rabbis of Judaism will not do. Mere babes, such as this tax-collector, Matthew, and his, associates, will do better.

Later on, we find this teaching which our Lord here presents in germ, in the form of a parable, expanded by St. Paul's labors, when, on a larger scale, the Gospel passed, from the Jews (as a nation) to, Gentiles, to those who, out of every kindred, tribe and nation, engage in the glorious ministry of the Gospel of his grace.

OUR PRESENT-DAY PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is interesting, too, to notice, that this same question, namely, the preservation of the Gospel, and the selection of those fitted to engage in its ministry, has recurred again and again, since then; and, each time after a period of falling away, the Gospel has been given again, and has seemed like new wine in its power to reinvigorate those whose hearts were ready for it. Each time too, the old wineskins were rejected—new wineskins had to be found. Luther and others of the Reformers were doubtless the new wineskins when the great Protestant Reformation had its beginning. In our own day, the day of Protestantism's decline, who that is at all acquainted with the facts fails to realize that our dear Brother Russell was selected as a fit vessel, a new wineskin, to preserve and uphold the glorious Gospel, all the wondrous features of which he clearly saw, and plainly stated, in the harmonious unfolding of the Divine Plan of the Ages, in which we all so greatly rejoice? How, certain it is, too, that the old wineskins, the leaders of nominal Christianity, with all due respect to a few devout souls amongst them, were in no condition, for 'this service, and had to be rejected for the same reasons that obtained amongst the Jewish leaders at our Lord's first advent? How careful, too, should we be today, who have been permitted to engage in this same ministry, that we continue to prove ourselves worthy thereof, lest it be taken from us, and given to others more worthy, and more appreciative of the honor!

OUR LORD'S GRACE TOWARD THOSE SLOW TO ACCEPT HIM AND HIS TEACHINGS

Thus, then, by three exquisite parables, our Lord, Jesus vindicates his disciples and himself. But has he no thought, no tenderness, for any disciples than his own? Yes; indeed he has. For, having vindicated his own, he instantly begins to make excuse for the disciples of John and of the Pharisees. "No man," says he, "having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for, he saith, The old is better." - Luke 5:39.

And here we have one of the most gracious touches in this table-talk about weddings and feasts, old garments and new wine; for it comes to this: A man loves his old cloak and his old wine. He has grown used to them; he has many pleasant associations with them. He likes the old garment, which habit has made easy; it is better to him than a new garment, even though the new be of finer material, and cut more in the fashion of the time. He likes the taste of the old wine, which he has had in his cellar many years, and to which he has grown accustomed, better than that of the new wine, however superior may be its quality. New wine, however others may praise it, is always repugnant to the palate of a man accustomed to wine, the roughness of which has been softened by age.

In like manner old habits of thought and worship, old customs and forms are not easily given up even in favor of more excellent habits, even though God himself has sent new methods and new opportunities. The Pharisees were used to their rites, their ceremonies, their traditions. It was not easy for them to give up the religious habits in which they had been bred, with which their names had been honorably associated; and our Lord patiently allows for the force of custom. He admits that it must be hard for them to turn away from the old wine they had drunk so long, even to take to a better wine. Hence he will not have the rabbis and their disciples hurried to a decision. It was

very natural for them that they should hesitate to renounce the old Law for the new Gospel, that they should want to patch up the old garment a little longer, and to pour the new wine into the old skin. The Law had come to them from God; it was the Law of the Lord; they knew that, and were sure of it. The Gospel also came from God, but they were not sure of that yet. Let them wait, and put it to the proof. As yet it was early times with them. Christ had not long taught in their streets, nor done many of his mighty works "among them; and because he knew how custom clings to men, and how new his words were to these men as yet, he virtually says to them: "Take time and thought. The whole habit and bent of your lives cannot be altered in a day. I do not expect you straightway to accept my words. You are quite right in not accepting them until you know that I too am come forth from God; and I can wait until you do."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

How many, and how weighty, are the subjects for reflection suggested by the talk at Matthew's table. It suggests, first, that whatever the sorrows by which we may be tried, there is set before us a joy capable of sustaining us under all the sorrows and fluctuations of time; and that having this joy we should let it give a festal tone to our lives-lives which would otherwise be overcast with sadness. It suggests, in the second place, that the true ritualism, the service in which we best express Christian piety, consists of love and holiness; that it lies, not in our scrupulous observance of ecclesiastical forms, but in acts of kindness, and neighborly good will, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. It suggests in the third place, that we are neither to impose our conceptions of truth and duty on our brethren, nor to submit to them when they try to impose their conceptions on us; but that, walking in the holy freedom which bows to no spiritual authority save that of Christ, we are to act out our own views of truth and duty, and to cheerfully accord to others the freedom we claim for ourselves. And finally it suggests that in our endeavors to minister the Gospel to others, either in the Church or in the world, we are to proceed warily and patiently, remembering that it is only as our labors have the cooperation of God's holy spirit that any lasting result, whether in ourselves or in others, may be secured.

- P. L. Read.

"Be Ye an Example to the Believers"

"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,
I'd rather one would walk with me than merely show the way;
The eye is a better pupil and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear.

"The best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds;
For to see good put in action is what everybody needs,
I soon can learn to do it if you let me see it done,
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

"The lectures you deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do;
I may not understand the high advice that you may give,
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live."

- *Bible Students Monthly, Eng.*

The Meeting of the Posts

"One post shall run to meet another." - Jer, 51:31.

A VALUED correspondent in Florida sends us some interesting questions and observations in reference to the article, "God Hath Spoken," a commentary on Hebrews, Chapter One, appearing in the February, 1945 issue of the "Herald." For our readers' convenience we have arranged his comments in, Question and Answer form, and quote them as follows:

Question: "What would you say about the following re John 1:14: 'And the Word was made flesh and [this flesh being] dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory [of perfect human nature] the glory of the only begotten [human] Son . . .' -- for while Adam was the son of God, Adam was created, not begotten, which is a great difference. The Logos did not 'dwell among us,' and no human being has ever beheld the glory of the Logos. And the Logos was created, not begotten. Therefore it is erroneous to speak of the Logos as 'God's only begotten Son'; and also an error to speak of Christ as God's *only* begotten Son, for he was but one of many thousands of God's Spirit-begotten children. The Bible consistently says of Christ Jesus that he was 'the first' of these Spirit-begotten ones. It is false to say that he was the *only* one."

Answer: The expression, "the only begotten Son" of the Father, in John 1:14,18 and John 3:16,18 appears to refer, as you suggest, to our Lord's human begetting as Mary's son -- the Son of Man. But 1 John 4:9, using the same language, would seem to us to refer to the Logos. He was the Father's "only begotten-Son" *before* he was "sent into the world." This was Pastor Russell's thought. On page 88 of *The At-One-Ment* he says:

"These statements respecting our Lord Jesus, that he was the . beginning of the creation of God, and that he had, therefore, an existence long before he came into the world as a man, to be our Redeemer, are fully confirmed by various Scriptures, a sample of which is the statement, 'God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might have life through him.' (1 John 4:9.) Here the statement most positively is that he was God's Son before he came into the world, and that, as God's Son, he was given a mission in the world to perform. Nor should it be overlooked that here, as in many other instances, the *Logos* is designated 'The Only Begotten Son' of God. The thought conveyed by this expression is that the *Logos* was himself the *only direct* creation or begetting of the Heavenly Father, while all other of God's sons (angels as well as men) were his indirect creation through the *Logos*. Hence the propriety, the truthfulness of the statement, that he was the Only Begotten Son of God."

Accordingly, we think you would have great difficulty in establishing that the Greek word *o* or its derivatives, meaning *born, begotten, or caused to come into being*, as applied to our Lord in the New Testament, refer *only* to his human begetting and birth, or to the descent of the spirit at his baptism. *Strong*, in the Greek Dictionary of his *Concordance* (a work of the greatest value to the Bible student) says of the *root of gennao*: "*Ginomai*, a primitive verb; *to cause to be; to become (come into being)*, used with great latitude."

Question: "Hebrews 1:5 is speaking of the spirit begetting of Jesus which made him Christ, a New Creature, and a Priest forever."

Answer: We understand that the quotation in Hebrews 1:5, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," which is from Psalm 2:7, has reference to our Lord's *resurrection*. This is definitely stated by the Apostle Paul in Acts 13:33, and implied in Romans 8:29 and Colossians 1:18. Commenting on these passages, Pastor Russell writes in the old *Watch Tower, Reprints*, p. R2149, 3rd par from foot of 2nd column:

"Although Messiah had long existed, as the archangel, nevertheless the Prophet David, speaking for God, said concerning him: 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten [literally *borne* or *delivered* thee.] The Apostle would have his hearers note that this birth mentioned referred to our Lord's resurrection, as it is written, he was the 'firstborn from the dead,' 'the firstborn among many brethren.'"

We would not understand that our Lord at the beginning of his ministry and trial time, before he had purchased the race by his sacrifice on Calvary, was eligible to receive the message addressed to him prophetically in Psalm 2:7.

Question: "When Jesus was 'begotten again' because he had given his human life to take Adam's place in death, this begetting made him Christ, and also a priest. As a priest he immediately began the sacrifice of his Body to make atonement for the personal sins of his Body and his House; and while he was on a higher than human plane from the time of his spirit begetting, it was not until *after* this sinoffering was finished that he was made the 'express image of the Father.' It should be easy to see that the Logos was not 'the express image of the Father' for that would make him to have the divine nature, and he could not have been 'made flesh' and 'dwelt among us' in the *likeness* of men. Hebrews 1:3, 4 is not speaking of the Logos, but is speaking of Christ, and Christ was made 'the express image of the Father' *after* he had made atonement for our sins by the sacrifice of his flesh body . . . finished on Calvary."

Answer: We agree with you that the Son did not become "the express *image*" - *karakter*, meaning character, in the Greek-of the Father until he had finished his earthly, sacrificial experience and so had been "made erect" (i.e., *complete*). -- Heb. 2:10; 5:9.

However, a careful distinction should be made between *doxa*, glory, distinction; *time*, character, honor (value); and *zoe*, life. Glory is of (a) personal achievement and of (b) office; character is a matter of education and development, hence of varying degree; and life differs on different planes. The gift of the Father to his Son at the latter's resurrection was *immortal life*-the "dividing of a portion with the Great" Jehovah. (Isa. 53:12.) This was entirely apart and distinct from the "express image" or character-likeness of Jehovah which he had achieved by faithful devotion to his Father's will, plan, and guidance throughout all his previous experiences as the Logos and as the Son of Man.

Question: "Verse 6 ... shows it was when spirit begotten that Christ was 'brought into the world'; and all during the three and a half years of his ministry angels, good and bad, were subject to him and *compelled* to obey him. Verse 7 also shows that the angels ministered unto Christ Jesus from the time He was begotten of the spirit, and *thus* 'brought into the world.'"

Answer: Although, as you say, the angels were unquestionably subject to our Lord during his first advent, the e writer of this verse of Hebrews is not referring to his past, but to his future, advent. As advent. As you will find by referring to the *Emphatic Diaglott*, *Rotherham's*, or any other literal translation, the text reads: "When He *again* bringeth the firstborn into the habitable." Pastor Russell comments on this verse: "The sense of Hebrews 1:4-6 (*Diaglott*) is that, when God had glorified Christ, mankind in general knew it not, but when, as God's messenger, he is again presented to man at his second advent, it will be in full demonstration that all the angels of God (all of God's holy ones) worship, reverence, and obey him."

- H. E. Hollister

The Question Box

Question.:

Isaiah 19:22-25 reads as follows:

"And the Lord shall smite Egypt; he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

When and how will this prophecy be fulfilled?

Answer:

This prophecy makes reference to three countries, namely, Israel, Egypt, and Assyria. Before taking up the question proper, it will be necessary to briefly consider the relationship of these three nations to each other; to reflect also on their typical significance.

In our previous studies* we have noted the rise and fall of the four world-empires, Babylon, MedoPersia, Greece, and Rome. Following the death of Alexander the Great and before the establishment of the Roman Empire, the Greek Empire, over which Alexander had ruled, became divided into four parts, namely, Greece, Trace, Egypt, and Syria. Of these four, history shows that Egypt and Syria were by far the greatest; it shows, also, that they continued to exist as distinct kingdoms after the territories of the others had become swallowed up by the Romans.

* See "Herald" for August and September 1942, "Seven Key Prophecies."

Syria was the kingdom to the north of Palestine, and Egypt the kingdom to the south. These two powers, their conflicts and alliances, form the subject of the greater part of the eleventh chapter of Daniel, where they are spoken of respectively as the "king of the north" and the "king of the south." - See *Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah*, Chapters 11 and 12.

Israel, then, lay between these two nations, both hostile to her and usually hostile to each other. With one or other of them she was forever in conflict. At times she sought an alliance with one against the other, instead of putting her whole trust in Jehovah..

Recently* an interesting and instructive suggestion appeared in this journal to the effect that "the Assyria of this prophecy symbolizes the Eastern world dominated, by communistic Russia with her satellite States, while Egypt is meant to represent the group of nations known as the Western Democracies," and the further suggestion was made that "Israel after having been reinstated in its land and after experiencing the change of heart foretold by the Prophets, would under its future leaders and teachers take its predestined place in the New Order, as an intermediary between the two at present irreconcilable points of view of the East and the West, interpreting one culture to the other and bringing them together in harmonious accord under the beneficent rule of the Great Messiah." We would not be at all surprised if matters should thus develop and that in addition to the historical events which scholars have been at pains to identify as fulfilling the predictions recorded, there should yet be one more literal fulfilment on so grand a scale.

* See "Herald," November 1946, page 165, "Modern Babel."

There remains, however, the symbolical significance to consider. Students of the Scriptures have long recognized that the experiences of natural Israel typified, in many respects, those of spiritual Israel, the Gospel-Age Church. Here in Isaiah, the position of natural Israel, lying between two hostile powers, is strongly suggestive of the Church of this Gospel Age, in her conflicts with nominal Christianity (Syria) on the one hand, and the spirit of the world (Egypt) on the other. With her, too, alas, has not the temptation often been strong to enter a forbidden alliance, first with the one and " then with the other?

In the chapter from which our question is taken, we note that in verse 19 Isaiah testifies of an altar in the land of Egypt which, he says, shall be for a sign and for a witness there, unto the Lord of Hosts. Josephus tells us that six hundred years later, Onias, son of Onias the high-priest, relying on this prophecy, requested permission of Ptolemy and Cleopatra to build a temple in Egypt like that in Jerusalem. Many scholars regard this temple as a striking fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction, particularly so in view of the fact that it was built on the very site of a ruined idol temple, in the district of Ir-ha-cheres (City of Overthrow), the place (see verse 18 - Isa. 19:18), where the old sun-worship was overthrown to make way for a purer and nobler faith, the faith of Israel.

Yet while we might regard the temple of Onias as *a* fulfilment, we could not accept it as *the* fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. The scope of the prediction is much wider. Unless we greatly err, it relates to the Great Pyramid of Gizeh "in the midst of the land of Egypt" and "at the border thereof." For some years now this pyramid has been "for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts [a witness to his foreknowledge and to his gracious plan of salvation . . .] in the land of Egypt; for they [the Egyptians -- the poor world, during the great time of trouble coming] shall cry unto *the* Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Savior, and a great one; and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt [the world], and the Egyptians shall know the Lord *in that day* [in the Millennial day -- at the close of the time of trouble] and shall do service with sacrifice and oblation: yea, they shall make vows unto the Lord and perform them. But the Lord shall smite Egypt [the world in the great time of trouble just at hand]. He shall smite and heal it. And they shall return unto the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." - Isa, 19:19-22." - S. S. *Vol. III*, page C317.

As a platter of fact the passage on which our question is based is really only a part of a section of the Book of Isaiah devoted to predictions as to the final end of all the nations. Commencing with chapter 13, the Prophet mentions, first, the "burden" or "doom of Babylon (in which is included Assyria; these two kingdoms being viewed as successive stages of one and the same power). Then follow the "dooms" predicted for Philistia, Moab, and Damascus, leading up to the doom of Egypt, which is portrayed in the chapter to which our question relates. The section culminates in chapters 24-27 in a general summary of judgment, in which- the overthrow of the whole earth is predicted and the glory of the ransomed both of Israel and of the nations in the holy mountain of the Lord. To quote from the last verse of this section:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown [God's providences in this work will be as loud and clear as a trumpet voice]; and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem." - Isa. 27:13.

Coming now to our question: "When and how will this prophecy of Isaiah be fulfilled?" -- may we not say that, aside from such partial fulfilments as may or may not have occurred, its complete fulfilment *is* still future? *When*, in that future, shall it be? Precisely when, we cannot say. It will be "in that day" -- the day long promised -- the thousand year day of Christ. It will be early in that day. *How* will the prophecy be fulfilled? We are not sure. We *expect to have a part in both the smiting and the healing of Egypt*, our expectation being based on the promises of our Lord. To the Christian Church the promise of our glorified Lord is: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne""and he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father." (Rev. 3:21; 2:26, 27; Psa. 2:8-12.) Yes, the nations will be broken to shivers, but not the individuals composing those nations. For, when the iron rod, in his hands and ours (exercised, not from this side but from the other side the veil), has accomplished the work of destruction, then will the hands that smote be turned to heal, and the people, under his guidance and ours, will return to the Lord and he shall heal them, giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. - Jer. 32:22, 23; Hos. 6:1; 14:4; Isa. 2:3.

- P. L. Read.

Old Watch Towers and Other Literature Available

The convention reports for 1912 and 1929, and a file of Watch Towers from the year 1894 to 1916, most of the early years complete and some in bindings, may be ordered and paid for upon examination. We have not seen them, but trust that some one will be enriched by them and at the same time render assistance to a widow to whom this slight financial assistance will be welcome.

Encouraging Messages

Dear Brethren:

The Hallowell, Maine, convention, which was held October 12 and 13, is now history. We can truly say that the Lord "opened the windows of heaven and poured out a blessing" on us all.

It was our privilege to have Brother G. E. Kemp act as Chairman of the convention. On Saturday afternoon there were two inspiring talks, one by Brother P. E. Thomson on "The Parable of the Sower," and the other by Brother J. Y. MacAulay, whose subject was the one word, "Consider." All know who and what we were admonished to consider. There was a testimony meeting between six-thirty and seven o'clock in the evening at which the friends expressed their heart-felt appreciation of the privilege of assembling and of the blessings already received. This was followed by two other talks. Brother J. E. Dawson spoke on "The Song of Solomon," touching on the terms of endearment giving expression of the love of the prospective Bride and Bridegroom for each other. Brother F. A. Essler used as his subject, "A Study in 'Isaiah.'" He said it gave him plenty of latitude, and as his basic text matter he read the first ten verses of the eleventh chapter of Isaiah and harmonized this portion with various other Scriptures to outline the Divine Plan.

Sunday morning Brother MacAulay's subject was, "Who Is Worthy?" It was searching and stirred to faithfulness. Brother Thomson encouraged us by a touching discourse, "Under His Wings," in which he stressed complete confidence in our Heavenly Father. It was a strengthener to faith in even the little things. Sunday afternoon Brother Sonntag gave an illustrated talk on "Trees of Righteousness," in which he showed the Source of our life and how fruitage is developed after we turn from sin to righteousness.

The final meeting was a public address by Brother Dawson, which was logically presented as he lined up the Scriptures proving the state of the dead and the promise of the resurrection. The audience gave close attention. There were several strangers present. One couple took literature and expressed a desire to have some one call. This has already been followed up with the expectation of making future calls.

We are very grateful to our Heavenly Father for this privilege of fellowship and appreciate the encouragement of the friends who traveled so far to be with us.

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

- Mrs. T. G. S. -- Maine.

Dear Brethren:

As we assembled for convention in Hallowell we had prayed, "Shew us the Master and it sufficeth us," and as we sat, drinking in the words of life and with open hearts and minds beholding as in a mirror the glory of God, we felt the transforming influence at work in our hearts. The words of John 1:14 and 16 became real and sweeter than ever before, "We beheld his glory . . . full of grace and truth." "And of his fulness have all we received." Hidden in the cleft of the Rock, we beheld his glory as he made his goodness pass before us, for his *goodness* is his greatest glory, and by the written Word proclaimed to us, we beheld the "Living Word," who is the effulgence of his glory.

May this word of appreciation bring refreshment of spirit, even if only as a cup of water, to those who ministered to us their God-given messages with such pastoral care.

From one of the least of these, his little ones,
O. D. A. -- Mass:

Dear Friends:

Please find enclosed payment for the "Divine Plan of the Ages" which I wish you to send me. This literature sounds very reasonable and truthful, so I would like to study it. All I have read is the little paper entitled, "When the Morning Cometh," which happened accidentally to fall into my hands.

I am sending a list of names, and I would be pleased and grateful if you would kindly send to each a copy of this tract. They are lost and hungry sheep.

Respectfully,
Mrs. V. C. J. -- Wash.

Our dear Friends:

With much delight have we received your magazine, "The Herald," and we thank you for it. It is refreshing to study the truth as presented therein. During the war, conditions were very difficult here in Denmark, but staying here in our little country the free friends continued in unity of spirit and had our studies and meetings. Connection with other countries was cut off, but our connection with our Father in heaven could no one take from us, and surely did we pray unceasingly and fervently. Now there is a kind of peace between the nations, but there is a restlessness over all. Fear is in every heart. But God's people are fearless, and our hope is that God's Kingdom is near, when his blessings will flow out to every creature. The hope for the world lies in the blessing of the knowledge of God and the opportunity that is to be brought to all by his Millennial Kingdom -- the restitution of all that was lost in Adam to all the willing and obedient at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified Church.

Praying the Lord's continued blessing on you all in America, and our brethren the world over,
Your brother and sister by his grace,
Mr. and Mrs. C. N. -- Denmark.

Recently Deceased

Mr. J. F. Jordan, Montreal, Que. - (August).

Mrs. Louise Luethi, Lake Mills, Wis. - (October).

Mrs. Belle G. Lyons, Wollastcn, Mass. - (October).

Miss Louise Slusarz, Chicago, ILL. - (October).