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The Birthday of a King

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made . known unto us." - Luke 2:15.

WHAT IS this thing which is come to pass? What deep secrets of Divine wisdom, justice, power and love lie here, wrapped up in these poor swaddling clothes? Mary holds in her arms what draws the wondering eyes and inspires the loftiest song of angels. We bend over the infant in the manger, and strange scenes in his after-life rise -upon our memory. Those little tender feet are yet to tread upon the roughened waters of a stormy lake, as men tread the solid earth. At the touch of that 'little feeble hand, the blind eye is to open, and the tied tongue to be unloosed, and diseases of all kinds to flee away. That voice, whose gentle breathings in his infant slumbers can scarce be heard, is to speak to the winds and the waves, and they shall obey it; is to summon the dead from the sepulcher, and they shall come forth; is to implant words of wondrous grace in the hearts of men, and they shall turn from sin and self -to serve the living God. Who, then, and what was he, whose birth the angels celebrated in such high strains? For answer, and for our Christmas season meditation, we shall consider some of the words of the inspired Prophet Isaiah who, anticipating the heavenly host, proclaims with exalted eloquence a Divine Plan which is to culminate in "glory to God in the highest" and "great joy to all people."

Using Rotherham's translation throughout, we commence with Isa. 59:12-20 -

"FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS HAVE MULTIPLIED BEFORE THEE,
AND OUR SINS HAVE WITNESSED AGAINST US,
FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS ARE WITH US,
AND AS FOR OUR INIQUITIES WE ACKNOWLEDGE THEM:
TRANSGRESSING AND DENYING YAHWEH,
AND TURNING AWAY FROM FOLLOWING OUR GOD,

SPEAKING, OPPRESSION AND REVOLT, CONCEIVING AND MUTTERING FROM THE HEART WORDS OF FALSEHOOD.

SO THEN THERE HATH BEEN A DRIVING BACK OF JUSTICE.
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AFAR OFF STANDETH, --
FOR TRUTH HATH STUMBLLED IN THE BROAD-WAY,
AND RIGHT CANNOT ENTER;
AND THE TRUTH HATH BEEN FOUND MISSING,
AND HE THAT HATH TURNED AWAY FROM WRONG
IS LIABLE TO BE DESPOILED.

AND WHEN YAHWEH LOOKED
THEN WAS IT GRIEVOUS IN HIS EYES THAT
THERE WAS NO JUSTICE:
WHEN HE SAW THAT THERE WAS NO MIGHTY MAN
THEN WAS HE ASTONISHED THAT THERE WAS NONE TO INTERPOSE, --
SO HIS OWN ARM BROUGHT HIM SALVATION,
AND HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS THE SAME UPHELD HIM;

AND HE PUT ON
RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A COAT OF MAIL,
AND A HELMET OF VICTORY UPON HIS HEAD, --
AND HE PUT ON THE GARMENTS OF AVENGING FOR CLOTHING,
AND WRAPPED ABOUT HIM AS A CLOAK -- JEALOUSY!
ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS ACCORDINGLY WILL HE REPAY,
INDIGNATION TO HIS ADVERSARIES,
RECOMPENSE TO HIS ENEMIES,
TO THE COASTLANDS -- RECOMPENSE WILL HE REPAY:
THAT THEY MAY REVERE --
FROM THE WEST THE NAME OF YAHWEH,
AND FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN HIS GLORY.
FOR HE WILL COME IN LIKE A RUSHING STREAM,
THE BREATH OF YAHWEH DRIVING IT ON;
SO SHALL COME IN FOR ZION A REDEEMER,
EVEN FOR SUCH AS ARE TURNING FROM TRANSGRESSION IN JACOB, --
DECLARETH YAHWEH."

Here, in primary reference to the iniquity of the Jewish nation, with words remarkable for beauty and strength, is described the moral condition of the world. The Lord is represented as seeing this state of deep guilt-a state where there was deep conviction of that guilt and a readiness to make confession -and as wondering that there was no intercessor, and as *Himself* interposing to bring deliverance and salvation. It was the earnest wish of the Lord that there should be deliverance, and in order to effect that he himself procured "it. The *characteristics* of the Glorious One who should accomplish these purposes were righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal. He would come to take recompense on his foes and to reward the wicked according to their deeds. The *effect* of this would be that the name of the Lord would be feared from the rising to the setting sun. Of this Deliverer the Prophet further speaks in Isa. 28:16 -

"THEREFORE
THUS SAITH MY LORD YAHWEH,
BEHOLD ME! FOUNDING IN ZION A STONE,

A STONE OF TESTING
THE COSTLY CORNER OF A WELL-LAID FOUNDATION,
HE THAT TRUSTETH SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE!"

So, says the Prophet, shall be laid-and so, add the Apostles (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6) has been laid in the coming of Christ into the world, the enduring foundation on which the whole system of truth and of salvation for mankind is to arise. Whosoever believeth on him shall not "hasten away" or "hasten about" (distractedly). He is the sure foundation, on which whosoever builds will not be confounded; but he is also a stone of stumbling, against which whosoever stumbles will be broken, and which will crush to powder whomsoever it falls upon. "This Child is set for the fall and rise of many." The Prophet continues (Isa. 7:14)

"WHEREFORE LET MY LORD HIMSELF GIVE YOU A SIGN, --
Lo! A VIRGIN, BEING WITH CHILD AND GIVING BIRTH TO A SON,
THOU WILT CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL."

A miraculous conception-the evidence of divine power! For how else could *a virgin* conceive? Two great and fundamental truths concerning the Messiah are here shown forth-his life was not received through Father Adam, and second, the fact of his prehuman existence! "The Logos became flesh." Only one virgin and one child Immanuel are spoken of-namely, the virgin Mary and the child Jesus. (Matt. 1:22, 23.) "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." (Gal. 4:4.) The Prophet speaks further concerning this child (Isa. 9:6, 7)

"FOR A CHILD HATH BEEN BORN TO US
A SON HATH BEEN GIVEN TO US,
AND THE DOMINION IS UPON HIS SHOULDER, --
AND HIS NAME HATH BEEN CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
FATHER. OF FUTURITY,
PRINCE OF PROSPERITY.
OF THE INCREASE OF DOMINION AND OF PROSPERITY
THERE SHALL BE NO END
UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID AND
UPON HIS KINGDOM,
BY ESTABLISHING IT AND
BY SUSTAINING IT,
WITH JUSTICE AND
WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS, --
FROM HENCEFORTH
EVEN UNTO TIMES AGE-ABIDING:
THE JEALOUSY OF YAHWEH OF HOSTS WILL PERFORM THIS!"

From the context we note how here the message changes with a striking abruptness, from the midnight of sorrow to a daybreak of hope and joy; from the Assyrian and Chaldean desolations to the times of Immanuel, the great hope of Israel, and the heir of David's throne. "A Son hath been givers to us," one worthy to bear these significant names, each indicative of the effect of his glorious reign -- a reign destined to endure so long, evermore fraught with blessings to the filling of earth's cup. What can be more magnificent; what can more completely fill out the answer to

the divinely prescribed prayer, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? And now does the Prophet speak further of the personal character and qualities of the promised Prince (Isa. 11:1-5)

"THERE SHALL COME FORTH A SHOOT FROM THE STOCK OF JESSE, --
AND A SPROUT FROM HIS ROOTS SHALL BEAR FRUIT;
AND THE SPIRIT OF YAHWEH SHALL REST UPON HIM, --
THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING,
THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND MIGHT,
THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND REVERENCE OF YAHWEH;
SO WILL HE FIND FRAGRANCE IN THE REVERENCE OF YAHWEH,
AND NOT BY THE SIGHT OF HIS EYES WILL HE JUDGE,
NOR BY THE HEARING OF HIS EARS WILL HE DECIDE;
BUT HE WILL JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS THEM WHO ARE POOR,
AND DECIDE WITH EQUITY FOR THE OPPRESSED OF THE LAND,
AND HE WILL SMITE THE LAND WITH THE SCEPTRE OF HIS MOUTH,
AND WITH THE BREATH OF HIS LIPS WILL HE SLAY THE LAWLESS ONE;
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL BE THE GIRDLE OF HIS LOINS
AND FAITHFULNESS THE GIRDLE OF HIS REIGNS."

Omitting the next four verses, so beautifully descriptive of the Millennium, the tenth verse reads:

"AND THERE SHALL COME TO BE IN THAT DAY
A ROOT OF JESSE, WHICH SHALL BE STANDING
AS AN ENSIGN OF PEOPLES,
UNTO HIM SHALL NATIONS SEEK, --
AND HIS RESTING PLACE SHALL BE GLORIOUS."

Of this Prince it is truly said, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." The sceptre of his dominion is grace -- grace displayed in the Gospel, grace communicated by the spirit, is the grand instrument of maintaining his empire. He reveals his glory and imparts his benefits, and thereby attaches his subjects by ties at once the most forcible and the most engaging. A lovely assemblage of qualities characterizes the spirit and genius of his administration; an incomparable majesty, united to a most endearing condescension a spirit of benignity, joined to impartial justice, distinguishes his conduct. In his personal qualities, he is one endowed with the highest intellectual, and moral gifts by the direct influence of the divine spirit. Descended of the lineage of David, he yet becomes the sustainer and life-giver to all his forebears. (See also Matt. 22:42-45; Rev. 22:16; Psa. 45:16.) Only in Jesus Christ have the terms of this prediction, verification. Of him, the Lord through the Prophet further speaks (Isa. 55:4)

"Lo! AS A WITNESS TO THE PEOPLES HAVE I GIVEN HIM,
AS A LEADER AND COMMANDER TO THE PEOPLES:
Lo! A NATION THOU SHALT NOT KNOW SHALT THOU CALL,
AND A NATION WHICH HATH NOT KNOWN THEE
UNTO THEE SHALL RUN,
FOR THE SAKE OF YAHWEH THY GOD,
AND FOR THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL BECAUSE HE HATH ADORNED THEE."

The essential meaning of these verses is that the Messiah is to be the Savior not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. This is in accord with Isa. 49:6 - "I will give thee to become a light of na-

tions, that my salvation may reach as far as the end of the earth." And now with still more directness does the Lord speak concerning his chosen One (Isa. 42:1-7)

"Lo! MY SERVANT -- I WILL UPHOLD HIM,
MY CHOSEN -- WELL-PLEASSED IS MY SOUL, --
I HAVE PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM,
JUSTICE -- TO THE NATIONS WILL HE BRING FORTH:
HE WILL NOT CRY OUT NOR WILL HE SPEAK LOUD, --
NOR CAUSE TO BE HEARD IN THE STREET HIS VOICE:
CANE THAT IS CRUSHED WILL HE NOT BREAK,
AND WICK THAT IS FADING WILL HE NOT QUENCH, --
FAITHFULLY WILL HE BRING FORTH JUSTICE:
HE WILL NOT FADE NOR WILL HE BE CRUSHED,
UNTIL HE ESTABLISH IN THE EARTH JUSTICE,
AND FOR HIS INSTRUCTION COASTLANDS WAIT.
THUS SAITH GOD HIMSELF --
YAHWEH --
CREATOR OF THE HEAVENS, THAT STRETCHED THEM FORTH,
OUT-SPREADER OF EARTH AND THE PRODUCTS THEREOF, --
GIVER OF BREATH TO THE PEOPLE THEREON,
AND OF SPIRIT TO THEM WHO WALK THEREIN --
I YAHWEH HAVE CALLED THEE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND WILL FIRMLY GRASP THY HAND,
AND WILL KEEP THEE AND GIVE THEE
AS THE COVENANT OF A PEOPLE
AS THE LIGHT OF NATIONS:
TO OPEN EYES THAT ARE BLIND,
TO BRING FORTH --
OUT OF THE DUNGEON THE CAPTIVE,
OUT OF THE PRISON THE DWELLERS IN DARKNESS."

As if in immediate response to the wonderful commission of these verses, the great Personage, the Blessed of the Lord, the Messiah himself appears, and in strains of exalted rejoicing announces his mission and its grand result-the restoration of a ruined world (Isa. 61:1-3)

"THE SPIRIT OF MY LORD YAHWEH IS UPON ME, --
BECAUSE YAHWEH
HATH ANOINTED ME TO TELL GOOD TIDINGS
TO THE OPPRESSED
HATH SENT ME TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED,
TO PROCLAIM
TO CAPTIVES LIBERTY,
TO THEM WHO ARE BOUND THE OPENING OF THE PRISON;
TO PROCLAIM
THE YEAR OF ACCEPTANCE OF YAHWEH AND
THE DAY OF AVENGING OF OUR GOD:
TO COMFORT ALL WHO ARE MOURNING;
TO APPOINT UNTO THE MOURNERS OF ZION --
TO GIVE UNTO THEM
A CHAPLET INSTEAD OF ASHES,
THE OIL OF JOY INSTEAD OF MOURNING,

THE MANTLE OF PRAISE INSTEAD OF THE SPIRIT OF DEJECTION, --
SO SHALL THEY BE CALLED
THE OAKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
THE PLANTATION OF YAHWEH:
THAT HE MAY GET HIMSELF GLORY."

Thus, and much more did the inspired Prophet speak concerning the little Babe of Bethlehem. Rather, thus spoke the Infinite One, through the lips of a mortal, the sublime message of salvation as it centered in him of whom he testified, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And shall not these glorious promises be fulfilled? Thus saith the Lord: "My word that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in that whereunto I have sent it." - Isa. 55:11.

O weary and care-worn souls, at this Christmas season look up and behold the glorious vision! It is no mere dream of delight to be presently swept away by the never-failing stream of woe: nay, it is the joy that is set before us. And, if we but cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, he, by his almighty power, will bring us safely to it, though perhaps, through much tribulation. Does not the very thought of his promises lighten the burden of the cross? Sorrows, conflicts, and perplexities may be thickening around us; let them only cause us to cry out with greater earnestness: "Thy Kingdom come!" In the sick chamber, or the place of heart breaking toil; in the lonely garret, or the full house in which we may sojourn as strangers among ungenial spirits; by the newly opened grave, or in the forsaken home; wherever the load of human anguish presses most heavily, let us, even in sorrow, rejoice that the time of suffering will soon be over, and then God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there any more be mourning, nor crying, nor pain. For all God's promises are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." - Luke 2:15.

Then be you glad, good people,
At this time of the year;
And light you up your candles,
For His star it shineth clear.

- *W. J. Siekman.*

"Have Faith in God"

"And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God." - Mark 11:22.

IT IS THE Master who thus addresses us. How full of meaning are his words! What life and spirit the words that he speaks will impart to us, if we will receive them, ponder them, and act upon them! "Have faith in God" -- just four short words, only three in the Greek; and yet, though we were to spend the best part of an hour discoursing on the topic of faith, we should say no more than Jesus here says. Nor is it our desire to add anything to his message. How could any one add anything to *his* message, when his every utterance sparkles with light and brilliancy as a well cut gem, and comes to us glowing with the warmth of his heart of love? Rather let us seek by reverent meditation to rivet his word on our minds, to catch the meaning of his message, to engrave more deeply on our hearts his heavenly counsel, to our lasting profit.

THE DIVINE ESTIMATION OF FAITH

"Have faith in God." It is no new message that the Master sends. Throughout the Scriptures our attention is frequently called to the importance of this quality of faith -- faith in God. The Apostle reminds us in Hebrews 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Indeed so highly does Jehovah esteem this quality of faith, faith in him and in his Word, that it is written of one who exercised great faith (Abraham), that God counted his faith unto him for righteousness. How important therefore if we would be of those with whom Jehovah is pleased, that we possess this faith of which the Apostle speaks, and which Abraham manifested in such high degree.

We may remember also the oneness which our Lord Jesus shares with the Father, and reflect that as those possessing great faith give the Father pleasure, so likewise our Lord Jesus is pleased with those who exercise faith and confidence in him. "O woman, said he to the woman of Canaan who had sought his aid, "great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." (Matt. 15:28.) The pleasure which Jesus derived from the faith displayed in him by the centurion is also very evident from the record, as we read (Matt. 8:8, 9): "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." We cannot say just how clearly the centurion recognized Jesus to be the Father's representative, one under authority indeed, the authority of the King of Heaven, one able also to speak with authority words which would be promptly obeyed. It is very evident, however, that his coming to Jesus in this way implied that he was possessed of great faith, so much so, that "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

LET US EXAMINE OURSELVES

All Jesus' works of healing were according to faith. "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matt. 9:29.) As he looked forward to the time of his second presence his inquiry was: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on 'the earth?" (Luke 18:8.) The form of this expression implies that the Master did not expect to find great faith on the earth at his return. Let us give him a great and a glad surprise! We know, of course, that we cannot really do this. He is no longer subject to human limitations, but is a highly exalted spirit-being, sharer with the Father of the divine nature. We could not of course really surprise him now. But in these times when faith is

fast falling from the earth, let us cultivate in our hearts and act out in our lives such a confidence in him as would cause him to register a delightful astonishment were he back with us in the old, human conditions. Even on the divine plane he is capable of joy, and there is no better way in which we may bring this to him. We need hardly be reminded how abundantly he is able to express his appreciation of our confidence and trust. *His* ability to bring delightful surprises into *our* lives is by no means exhausted.

In view, therefore, of the importance attaching to this quality of faith in God, let us consider it afresh together, and as we do so, let us as the Apostle exhorts, examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith. (2 Cor. 13:5.) If in a humble attitude of heart and mind we so do, the result must surely be that the weak -faith of some will become less weak, and the strong faith of others will become still stronger, to the glory of God and of his Son Jesus, our Lord.

FAITH MUCH MISUNDERSTOOD

At the outset it will be well for us to have clearly before our minds just what is meant by faith. On account of the darkness of the past, and on account of our great Adversary, who delights in and is the author of confusion, many curious misunderstandings of the simple truths of Scripture have arisen in men's minds, and of none perhaps more than that of the teaching respecting faith. People have been urged to believe very unbelievable and unreasonable things. Others have been told that all that was necessary to salvation was to believe, and then were left to wonder and puzzle over what they were to believe, or whom. Some noting the Apostle's statement, "All men have not faith" (2 Thess. 3:2) * have concluded that some people, either at birth or subsequently have been endowed with this quality of faith and others not, and that the Gospel message is preached merely to stir up this faith lying dormant, so to speak, in these specially favored ones. *That is* not the teaching of the Bible.

* A preferred translation is "All men have not fidelity." (See also Gal. 5:22 where "faith" should read "fidelity".)

The Gospel does not stir up something that is already there. When the Gospel comes there is no faith, but the Gospel there and then creates faith in the message and in the One of whom that message speaks. Surely nothing can be more apparent than that faith is not a quality which can be possessed apart from an object. It is not possible merely to have faith. There must be some one or some thing in which one's faith rests. We may have faith in a bridge as we ride over it that it will bear the load; we may have faith in a man that he will act uprightly; but we cannot have faith at all apart from an object. As well speak of breathing without air, of swimming without water, of living without a body. Jesus did not say, "Have faith." Had he done so, it would be a proper inquiry for us reverently to ask, "In what, in whom, dear Lord?" His message leaves no room for such inquiry. His message is complete. "Have faith *in God.*"

How glad we are to be able to turn to God's Word, the Bible, as we would unto a lamp which shineth in a dark place, for light on this important subject. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, verse 28, we read of some who came to our Lord with these words: "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" In the next verse we read our Lord's reply: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Let us notice these words very closely. It is evident that *faith is a work*; not a work of the hands, but a work of the mind. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." In other words their minds were to be exercised in respect to the one whom God had sent (Jesus), with the result that they would believe on him.

Let us turn to another Scripture. (Rom. 10:17.) Here the Apostle explains that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Another translation renders the word "hearing," report. Faith cometh by a report. It would be proper to say that faith cometh by hearing a report, a message; and faith in God therefore cometh by hearing a report, a true report; a message, a true message concerning himself, his magnificent character, his glorious plans and purposes.

NO FAITH WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING

We can see too, that this report or message which comes to us must also be understood by us ere we can intelligently believe it. A moment's reflection will convince us of the truth of this. Suppose, by way of illustration, that a Chinaman were to come into our midst, and address us in Chinese, and at the conclusion of his address the question were put to us: "Do you believe his message? We would each in substance reply, "I neither believe nor disbelieve his message; I do not understand him." Before our minds could get to work on his report, we should have to secure the services of an interpreter. It would not be untruthful for us to say that we had not yet heard his message; all we had heard was a noise, which carried no meaning to our minds. An intelligent appreciation of any report must therefore be possessed ere faith can be exercised in it.

Moreover, from the Apostle's words we see that while faith is not itself knowledge, it must nevertheless rest upon knowledge. Perhaps a simple illustration will make that clear. Let us suppose that word reaches us that Brother A has been guilty of some serious misdemeanor. Some one who has never met Brother A or whose knowledge of him is very limited will perhaps remark, "That seems dreadful! What a pity, another good man gone wrong!" or words to that effect. How much faith does that one exercise in Brother A? None. Why? Because he has no knowledge of him. Men do turn to doing wrongful acts, and for all he may know Brother A may have done so too. But what happens when Brother B gets the news? Brother B receives the news with an amused smile. Why? Because he knows Brother A too well to believe any such thing concerning him. Now Brother B does not know any more about the alleged misdemeanor than does the other Brother whose faith in Brother A failed. He could not appear in court and solemnly affirm that of his own personal knowledge the story about Brother A is untrue, but from the knowledge that he does have of Brother A, gained through years of close association and fellowship, he is convinced that the story is untrue. With this knowledge as a basis he is able to exercise faith beyond actual knowledge, and his confidence in Brother A remains unshaken.

There are many illustrations of faith all around us. Take for example that of the navigator in his chart and compass. Though no land is *in sight*, he takes these as his guides, fully expecting to reach port safely. Similarly some people far out on the ocean of life are steadily steering by the aid of their chart, the Bible, the Word of God, for the promised haven, the New Jerusalem. We doubt not that if they continue in its teachings, they will reach port safely in due time.

We exercise faith in many ways. We drop a letter in the mail box, never doubting but that it will reach its destination safely. We have plenty of faith and trust in our friends, and it is right and proper that we should have. Nevertheless, letters do sometimes go astray, and there have been instances in history in which confidence in a friend has proved to be misplaced. As we reflect upon these things our Lord's words take on an added meaning. "Have faith *in God*." No confidence in him has ever proved to be misplaced. No confidence in him ever will. "Have faith *in God*." Even though we ourselves were to become unworthy of trust, which God grant we never may, yet *he* will remain worthy. "If we believe not," says the Apostle (2 Tim. 2:13), or rather as the Diaglott renders the passage, "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself."

When the Apostle was with the Church at Corinth, he tells us that his speech and *his* preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:4, 5.) Just what does he mean? What was it to speak in demonstration of the spirit and of power?

We all know what a demonstrator is. When a new article for household use is put on the market, for example, a vacuum cleaner, the prospective purchaser usually asks for a demonstration. , The cleaner has already been described, now a demonstration is requested. The prospective purchaser asks for some one to display it, to actually operate the equipment, and to show how it may be operated in the absence of the demonstrator; to point out the uses to which the equipment may be put, and the advantages which it offers over competitive makes. So with the Apostle. He gave a demonstration, a display. But of what? A display of spirit and a display of power. He did not string words together in pretty phrases to entrap his hearers into "placing an order," but he "sold them" on the proposition.

There is a wide distinction in the business world between an order taker and a salesman. *An* order taker gets an order, but frequently the customer is dissatisfied and goes elsewhere for the next purchase. A salesman sells not himself, but the house he represents, so that even though *he* should die, the customer continues buying from the same source of supply. Now, the Apostle sold his customers (that is to say, he convinced his hearers of the truth of *God*) He gave a display of spirit, of God's holy spirit of truth; *he did not just tell them about it, but he showed them how it operated; he showed them how it was working holiness in his own life, and in the lives of his associates; how it caused him to devote his life to speaking God's message, simply, earnestly, lovingly, courageously; how it enabled him to endure all manner of evil things without losing faith in God, how it enabled him to fill up indeed that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ.* He told them about God and Jesus, and of the great plan of redemption through his blood. To the Greeks, to the worldly-wise, the preaching of the cross was foolishness, but to believers it was God's power. *Dynamite* is the word in the Greek, and with dynamic power the simple Gospel message gripped them, *and began to operate in their hearts.* A veritable explosion took place. The Gospel of God's love, his power unto salvation, emphasized in *their hearts their* need of a Savior, *and led them to turn from sin to holiness, from the worship of idols to serve the living God.*

Ah! when the Apostle had the truth, and knew that he had it, he spoke it. He spoke it in love, he spoke it confidently, he spoke it as it is in Jesus, and the result was that the faith of his hearers, resting in the power of that truth, was in God himself.

Friends, as we examine ourselves, let *us* make sure that our faith, too, rests in God. If instead, our faith is resting in the wisdom of a man, *it will lack strength under test.* Should another man a little wiser appear on the scene, his greater ability in argument or debate will cause us to change our faith until such time as we meet with one of still greater persuasive powers, *or it may be a little more experienced in subtle phrases and fine talk,* when our faith *will* once again change. Such faith, standing in the wisdom of men, will cause us to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and as a result of this unstable condition of *mind,* we shall be unstable also in all our *ways.* With what care therefore should we examine ourselves to see to it, that for every item of our faith we have the unmistakable testimony of God's own Word. Such faith will show firmness, and that, we are told, is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word used in Abraham's case, when he believed God. Such faith will endure.

- P. L. Read.

(To be concluded in our next issue)

The Jew and World Problems

"He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." - Isaiah 27:8.

ALL THOUGHTFUL people who study the prophecies of the Bible reverently and seriously cannot help but reach the conclusion that "Palestine" and the approaching "World Crisis" for which all nations are now feverishly preparing are inseparably associated in the sacred Scriptures. That Palestine with its capital, Jerusalem, will yet become the "cockpit" of the nations, ultimately embracing what *is* Biblically known as the "Battle of Armageddon," "the great day of God Almighty," is clearly set forth by the Prophet Joel. As we read the following Scripture, please keep in mind the fact that this coming "crisis" among the nations is definitely associated with the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine -- an event we are witnessing today. We quote from that prophecy, Joel 3:1, 2, Moffatt's translation:

"For in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, then I will gather all nations and bring them down into the Judgment Valley, where I shall assign them their doom for the treatment of my people and of Israel my heritage, because they scattered my people among pagans and divided up my land."

In order to link up intelligently present events with the future crisis and its outcome, we must for a little while review the past. The history of Palestine is unique, especially in view of the use to which *it* has been put by the Great Jehovah. It is because of this that it is called the "Holy Land," for here it was that Jehovah was pleased to give to mankind a revelation of his glorious character and his benevolent designs. No more appropriate place could our gracious Creator have found as a "*Center*" from which to radiate the light and truth of his wondrous Plan. Palestine is a country which unites three great continents -- Asia, Africa, and Europe. Consequently it was much traversed by the great trade routes of the ancient world. Travelers from the great empires of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia could not help making contact with the enlightenment flowing from God's "chosen people," at that time.

By this means knowledge would rapidly spread among the nations of the world. That the children of Israel were specially chosen by God for this very purpose is indicated by Leviticus 20:26: "And ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine." Thus the object of their separation was that they might exemplify in their conduct that revelation, and ultimately become a chosen race through whom God might enlighten and bless all other nations. In Israel the surrounding nations found such an instrument of divine Providence. Israel displaced nature worship by spirit or heart-worship; belief in many "gods" by "Faith" in the One and only "Jehovah God"; the uncleanness of paganism by the purest code of morality. It was because of the abominable practices of the early inhabitants of Palestine that God determined to remove them. The time of their determined removal was when God saw the offspring of faithful Jacob suffering grievous -bondage in the land of Egypt. Concerning this we read in Exodus 3:7-9 (Moffatt): "The Eternal said, I have indeed seen the distress of my people in Egypt, I have heard them wailing under their slave drivers; for I know their sorrows and I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a fine, large land, abounding in milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites."

During forty years wandering in the wilderness the adults of that generation perished on account of unbelief. When the "young nation" were about to take possession of Palestine under the leadership of Joshua, they were counseled in the following language (Deut. 8:6-11): "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the *good* land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day." Notice also Joel 3:19, 20: "And it shall be if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyed before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God." For a while they were faithful to God, but after the death of Joshua, pride and ambition led them to demand of Samuel a king.

Hitherto Israel had been a Theocracy, that *is*, a nation over whom Jehovah God had exercised complete rulership. He, however, was an invisible God, without the pomp and circumstance of an earthly king. They desired "a mighty king, a visible ruler like those of the surrounding nations. This was tantamount to repudiating Jehovah *as* their overlord. However, in response to their rebellious demand, Saul was appointed to lead them. Then followed their line of kings whose frequent lapses into unfaithfulness led to their final rejection and overthrow at the time of Zedekiah their last King.

A NATION FAVORED OF GOD

As a people they had much advantage every way chiefly in the fact that to them were committed the oracles of God, developing amongst them poets, statesmen, politicians, and philosophers. Gradually, they progressed from being a nation of slaves in their early career to being as in the days of Solomon at the zenith of their national glory, a people distinguished and honored amongst all the nations of earth. Yet in spite of God's manifold blessings, their hearts turned from God for they were repeatedly given over to idolatry or devil worship, practicing the detestable rites and ceremonies of their pagan neighbors. Little wonder that Jehovah punished them again and again.

Thus their history was a very checkered one, marked by altercations, and removals from their land through the medium of fierce and powerful nations. Repeatedly they repented, and repeatedly God restored them, until finally the greatest crisis of all came with the advent of their Messiah. At this time they were back in their homeland, but were the subjects of the oppressive power of Imperial Pagan Rome. This was an intolerable burden, and frequently they found themselves in a state of incipient rebellion, while their leaders had become proud, haughty, and bitter hearted. We are all familiar with the story of how they rejected their King -- they crucified their Messiah. Such blood guiltiness could merit only a terrible judgment at the hands of God, and did so. What a blessing it would have been could they have solemnly recalled the terrible curses of the law recorded in Deuteronomy 28, which should be their portion if they were unfaithful to their covenant! But they were unbelieving and rebellious, and so their Age ended in the greatest period of tribulation the nation had ever known. Foretelling that time, Jesus said, "For there shall be great tribulation," etc. This terrible retributive judgment was accomplished between the years A.D. 66 and 73 -- seven years of unparalleled tribulation. Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jewish polity overthrown, and those remaining were scattered to the four winds of heaven. And from that day until now, Jerusalem has been trodden down of the Gentiles. Jesus said: "They shall fall by

the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." - Luke 21:24.

Some take exception to the application of our Lord's words concerning the great tribulation at the end of the Jewish Age, but the context of Matthew 24, fully confirms it. A secondary application is also possible. In the end of the Jewish Age one nation was involved, namely Israel, and the medium of punishment the Roman armies. In the end of this Age, all nations are involved, and the subject of special judgment is "Babylon the Great," or Roman Christendom. Jesus, however, is the greatest authority and the thing he had in mind seems to have been not so much *magnitude* as *severity of trouble*.

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

For a full account of these terrible scenes we -must refer you to the works of Josephus, the historian. He was not a Christian, and seems to have been specially preserved by God to give his own account of these things as he witnessed them. For the want of all things, owing to the straightness and terror of the siege, they killed and ate their own children. No nation has been reduced to such cannibalism either during 1914-1918 or the later war. Those fateful words, "Woe unto them that are with child," etc., seem to have special reference to the curse of Deuteronomy 28:49-57. Over a million perished in the city, whilst those escaping were crucified in all manner of forms outside the city walls. Not only all the righteous blood shed from Abel down to Zecharias was required of that nation, but the greatest crime in all history was charged to their account, namely, the shed blood of the "Son of Man." No other nation under the sun has ever had such a catalogue of crime laid at its doors. Nor was this the end of their chastisement. Nearly two millenniums of suffering have followed, and it still continues.

In spite of their stiff necked obstinacy and their rebellious unbelief, a divine providence supervises all their ways. God is their Preserver for they are still an essential part of his purpose. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" - Rom. 11:25-33.

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION ASSURED

Coming to modern times, we see that in some countries they have obtained a respite from persecution. They have not only been tolerated but honored, in some countries attaining the highest offices in the state, as for instance, Disraeli in England. Nevertheless intolerance is not dead, for in some parts of the earth bitter and relentless persecution is still their portion. For long centuries both the Jew and his homeland have been blighted, but a mighty change is coming. Yes, it has already commenced. Remarkable signs of rejuvenation are in evidence. The Turk has been driven out and the Jews are taking possession. People land are being joined together once more. The land is again becoming astonishingly fruitful, while the Jew himself is fired with a zeal to possess it. Persecution bitterly manifest during recent years has quickened this idealism within the breast of thousands of Jews.

The questions arise then, Are the Jews the rightful owners and justly entitled to full, free, and uninterrupted possession of the land? Will the Jews be restored to that land, build there a permanent home, and dwell there in peace? If the answer is in the affirmative, it should bring real comfort to the heart of all Jews. Not only so, but this subject is of vital concern to every Gentile, for the settlement of the world's unparalleled problems today lie interlocked with this very feature. Just as the prophetic Scriptures foretold their dispersion amongst the nations, that same Word projecting its light far forward tells of their regathering amid mighty upheavals among the Gentile powers and finally of peace, prosperity, and life through this persecuted people.

That it is God's predetermined purpose to reunite people and land is clearly established by many Scriptures. Notice Amos 9:14, 15: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." From this statement alone we can rest assured that Almighty Power will be exercised on their behalf. Not only did God decree their final possession of the land, but its full dimensions were decreed also. While instituting their original covenant with Father Abraham, God said (Gen. 15:18), "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Later, when about to enter into Palestine, we read, Deuteronomy 11:24: "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea, shall your coast be."

During the height of their national glory under Solomon, they did not possess the whole of Palestine, but what we term historical Palestine. Vast areas were never occupied because they were largely undeveloped desert land. The land they did -occupy must have been exceedingly fruitful, for it supported a vast multitude of people. It, with its adjacent deserts, embraces an area upwards of 300,000 square miles -half the size of Europe. That land with its adjacent deserts, during the time of Israel's restoration, will eclipse completely in fruitfulness all its past history, for God has said it shall be so (Isaiah 51:3): "For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

These facts also impress us with the realization that God's declared purpose to fully restore Israel to their homeland as well as to resurrect all past generations of Israel, and other nations as well, is eminently a practical proposition. (See Ezekiel 16:48-63.) Palestine is indeed the Wonderland of the Bible and of the world, earth's center, uniting three great continents. Its history is a summary of human experience. Physically it looks like a miniature world. Of all the changes wrought by time, the elemental forces have fashioned no other country like it.

A COUNTRY WITHOUT COMPARE

Although in relation to the great continents it is but a small country, its configuration is so remarkable in the matter of valleys, mountains, plains, and hills that somewhere within its borders can be found varying temperatures from cold to the tropical zones of the earth. Consequently, every kind of natural product of vegetable, fruit and flower can flourish within its borders. Supposing we were privileged to cross Palestine by air from the desert over Beersheba, in about an hour's time we should be crossing the cedars of Lebanon, one hundred fifty miles northward. We should thus get a lovely view of the whole extent of the land unto Dan-divided longitudinally

into four great strips. On the west we should see the wondrously blue Sea of the Mediterranean washing the sand dunes on the shore.

The first section, parallel with the coast intersected by Mount Carmel, is a strip fifteen miles wide, consisting of the once fertile plains of Philistia and Sharon, capable of bearing prodigious crops of wheat and barley, as well as immense groves of oranges, lemons, almonds, and citrons. Jaffa oranges are already world famous.

The second strip consists of a great limestone plateau rising in places to 3,000 feet. This sector is the stronghold of the land. There is the strength of the hills, which in the clays of old brought a sense of security to the people of Israel. When these hillsides are re-terraced and irrigated, they will bear bumper crops of grapes, as well as give sustenance to myriads of olive and mulberry trees.

On the east is the third great strip consisting of the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea. The main waters of the Jordan come down from Mt. Hermon in the north, and as they descend they enter the most amazing fracture of the earth, which ever deepens in its course until it reaches the Dead Sea whose surface is 1,292 feet below the Mediterranean, and the bed sinks in places 1,300 feet lower. There is no deeper rift than this in the crust of the globe. Even the silver clouds which at times overshadow the waters are themselves often floating below sea level. Owing to its great depth, the Jordan Valley has practically a tropical climate, with the result that every exotic plant such as bananas, dates, plums, cocoanut trees, grapefruit, and also cotton can be grown in this remarkable tract.

The fourth section, beyond the River Jordan, comprises the mountains of Gilead, which form an almost unbroken range 2,000 feet high, also the mountains of Moab, 4,000 feet high. The land beyond consists of thousands of square miles of desert, which merely requires the unlocking of vast fountains of water which are said to be but a little way beneath the surface. This would indeed fulfill the Prophet's declaration, Isa. 35:6: "For in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert."

Fifty years ago there were less than 20,000 Jews in Palestine, which was largely a desolation. Now there are close to a million, increasing by thousands every month. A vast amount of wealth has already been expended in the country through Zionist activities. Millions of trees have been planted of various kinds, and over a hundred colonies established. Great stretches of land, recently barren and useless, have been transformed and now bear abundant crops of grain, vegetables, and fruit. Places once a wilderness have now the appearance of a smiling country side. Then again the waters of the Jordan have been harnessed, in a measure, and are already producing cheap electricity for lighting and motive power. The waters of the Dead Sea are being drawn upon and pumped into great evaporation beds. When the waters are drained away a considerable quantity of nitrogen and potash is left behind. It is said that there is enough potash in these glassy waters to supply the entire needs of the world for the next ten years. It has been estimated that it could yield fertilizers valued at 8,000,000,000 sterling-enough to pay the cost of the First World War.

MAN'S WORKS, A FAINT SUGGESTION OF GOD'S PURPOSES

In addition to all this, industrial and educational activities are forging ahead. Transformation is the order of the day every where. This gives us a fair idea of what lies ahead when divine favor shall have fully returned to Israel. Concerning that time the Prophet Ezekiel declares, Ezekiel 36:33-36: "Thus saith the Lord God, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your

iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it."

The return of the Jew to rebuild his homeland is indeed a thrilling spectacle, for it is a direct fulfillment of Jehovah's immutable Word. We are face to face with a positive manifestation of divine power in human affairs. There is an old saying that if you want to know how the world is wagging, keep your eye on the Jew. How true! The Jew is indeed the index finger of God. In times past peoples were uprooted to give place to Israel. When mighty empires sought to crush or destroy them, their armies were defeated and their power broken. Such was the experience of ancient Egypt and Assyria. Those bitterly persecuting the Jew today and who are opposed to his return to Palestine, will suffer much in the coming storm. First and foremost they are opposing the will of the Most High. Some like the Jews, some do not, but without doubt they are the most remarkable and the most formidable people who have ever trod the earth. Wherever they have dwelt all down the ages they have made their presence felt and do still. About the year 1500 the Jews were utterly and finally expelled from Spain, and that was the end of Spain's glory in Europe. The reformation in Northern Europe began from a spark -- an attempt to destroy the Jewish sacred writings.

The French Revolution is said by some students to be the direct result of movements amongst the Jews towards freedom and power. The three countries where the Jews have been most badly treated during the last half century are Turkey, Russia, and Germany, with the result that those countries have been turned upside down.

Some years ago, Dr. Weizmann, stating the Jewish case before members of the British Government, spoke of Jewry's present experiences as the darkest hour in their history.

MANY CHANGES SINCE THEN

Now while neither Jew nor Arab seems to be getting all they want, nevertheless we can rest assured that in spite of such conflict of interests, and the very difficult position in which the mandatory power found itself, we as students know that God's purpose in the matter shall be accomplished. "Nothing can thwart or hinder."

Jewish control of Palestine was dreaded by the Arab population, whose hatred of the Jews has been stirred by enemies. Until quite recently there were three Arabs to every Jew in Palestine. The Mohammedan population is already very sensitive over the progress of Zionism. There was a considerable amount of trouble in Palestine fairly recently, but a major conflict was kept at bay by the fact that the British were the actual rulers in the land and not the Jews. Great changes have taken place. Great Britain has retired from the scene. The Jewish nation has experienced a national rebirth after nearly 2,000 years of exile, while the Arabs have retired to nurse their wounds, and make their plans for another day. The Arabs of Trans-Jordania, of Syria, of Iraq, and Arabia proper, are ever ready to make common cause with the Palestinian Arabs. When the due time shall have come, these would readily be followed by the Mohammedan peoples in Egypt and North Africa, as well as in Persia and Asia Minor.

That such a conjunction is certain to take place is indicated by the Scriptures, but Jehovah God will have something to say and something to do in 'the matter. To these peoples of the East will

be added as confederates various godless classes from Christendom, and unitedly they are described in the prophecies of the Bible as the forces of Gog, of the land of Magog. Palestine will then become the "cockpit" of the nations. These conditions God has clearly foreseen and foretold in his Word, and they are now taking shape in the affairs of men and nations. And mark you, God has also foretold his own course of action amid these stirring scenes. He will most surely intervene on Israel's behalf, and to the complete discomfiture of her foes. See Jeremiah 30:2-7, which we quote in part: "For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and -they shall possess it Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

Present day conditions have a distinct bearing on these forthcoming events, when Palestine and the world crisis will be definitely linked together. Therefore, before showing the sequel in the great Armageddon conflict, let us take a brief glance at the world situation.

Today the world is divided into two camps and stands face to face with two conceptions of life. One is embodied in the Atlantic Pact and the United Nations organization, and stands for collective peace by arbitration. The other is the Totalitarian Communistic State, which has already engulfed half the world. The two concepts are squarely at issue. Their insurmountable divergences have been in evidence in Paris during the conference of the Big Four. We speak advisedly-not by our own wisdom. Our authority is the Word of God. Any attempt by one party to finally impose its will and system upon the other will finally terminate our so-called Christian civilization altogether. The real crisis which the world now faces, however, is far deeper and immeasurably more realistic than that conceived by the statesmen, politicians, financiers; and philosophers. It is much more than a conflict between two conceptions of human government. Such conflicts have been more or less in evidence all down the ages, but all combined are a mere trifle in comparison with the real crisis itself. We speak now not of a remote possibility or a speculative probability. Humanity now faces the imminent certainty of having the whole business of governing itself taken bodily out of its hands. No other crisis can compare with this in the nature and extent its culmination will have upon the interests of the self-governing nations of the world, whether they be Democracies or Dictatorships.

MAN'S FAILURE

And that is the exact position we now occupy upon the stream of time. Man has utterly failed at self government. Political parties of all shades of opinion in all parliaments of the world have accused each other of incompetence, stupidity, incapacity, all down the centuries. Man has never been able to establish a satisfactory state of society or to introduce an ideal government. This fact is going to be fully demonstrated beyond all cavil -before the present Age completely closes down. The supreme reason for man's failure is the fact that he is out of harmony with his Creator and the laws he has established for the government of his universe. Added to all this is the fact that mankind for centuries has been under the evil influence of the great Adversary, the Devil. The Lord's early work upon his return was to be to bind the Devil and restrain his power. This binding of the Devil was to be associated with the destruction of the forces of Gog and Magog in the now fast approaching Armageddon. The apparent course of events, then, the Scriptures would seem to indicate as follows:

Economic conditions in Europe are going from bad to worse. The present Cold War is driving the nations to spend millions upon millions upon armaments and schemes of so-called national security and defense. Bankruptcy must inevitably ensue. This terrible state of affairs will lead to a gradual reduction of the standard of life in all countries, far too low already in some countries,

and in need of improvement-in our own (Great Britain). Thus we can visualize not only grave dissatisfaction, but eventually economic disaster. In the meantime, Antisemitism is extending everywhere and becoming more intense. This may further deplete the nations through the Jews withdrawing their finances, which are immense, and diverting them to the Holy Land. The interests and activities in Palestine could thus receive a great boom, whilst, the regathered Jews would enjoy unprecedented prosperity. This could cause the Pagan communities in Christendom, the Arabs in Palestine and the near East, as well as the Moslems, to look with envious eyes upon regathered, prosperous Jewry, and provoke them to plan a great mischief against them. The Devil will be behind this move, for these forces are to be under his leadership. Thus would he seek through them to crush Israel and, thwart the completion of the divine purpose; but he will fail. The outside nations like Great Britain, North and South America, Canada, etc. would be as helpless to divert this gathering as was the League of Nations in the Abyssinian dispute, the, Japanese and Spanish conflicts.

Much detail is given us in regard to these things in the prophecies of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Nehemiah.. Let us note one: Ezekiel 38:14-18; 19-23:

"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God, In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou. shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: and thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord God, Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the Prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. [What is really meant by this furious indignation of the Most High is made clear in Eze. 38:22-23:] And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord."

GOD'S PURPOSE

The real reason why God is going to allow this final spasm of anguish to come upon regathered Israel is to bring them to a full realization of their terribly undone condition in his sight. This final struggle will both break their hearts and open their mental eyes, and in their deep anguish of soul they are represented in the Scriptures as crying unto the Lord for deliverance, and it is at this very juncture that the Lord intervenes, for he will be manifested in, power and great glory. Then will the prophetic words of the Savior uttered just after he had pronounced those fateful words concerning the destruction of Jerusalem be realized. In Matthew 23:39, he said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, you will never see me any more until that day when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

As for the Gentile powers, God will teach them that profound truth enunciated to that proud ruler of great Babylon, in those memorable words spoken by Daniel the Prophet: "And that thou mightest know that the Most High ruleth amongst the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will." - Dan. 4:25, 32.

As a people Israel still reject Christ as the Messiah; hence the coming storm, terrible as it will be, will prove to be a blessing in disguise. They shall yet learn that behind a frowning providence God hides a smiling face. A great national mourning is indicated on the part of restored Jewry as they realize their national guilt in connection with the crucifixion of Christ. All these points are clearly drawn to our attention in Zechariah 12:9-11: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations 'that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimimon in the valley of Megiddon."

Sufficient information is given us in Ezekiel and Genesis 10, also other prophecies, to guide us to Gog's identity. Gog's confederates are descendants of Japheth, who occupied the Isles of the Gentiles, that is, the coastlands of the Mediterranean in Europe and Asia Minor. From here they spread themselves over the whole continent of Europe and a considerable portion of Asia. Gog is a great northern leader whose territory is found there, but with a confederacy from other areas of Europe, and associated with them Asiatic peoples who come under Gog's control.

Bearing in mind the several prophecies which have reference to the final gathering of the nations and the circumstances connected with them, we may arrive at a fairly accurate conception of the sequence of events which will mark the complete end of the present world order and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. Then will follow Messiah's reign -- 1,000 years of peace. For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. The subject has by no means been exhausted, but only touched upon, sufficiently we trust to arrest interest and lead to further inquiry and searching of the Scriptures, that thus we may be found in fullest harmony with Jehovah's arrangements and find abiding happiness and eternal life through obedience to his holy will.

- *H. Chrimes, Eng.*

The Question Box

Question:

The Scriptures make it clear that we are justified by faith. (Rom. 3:28; 5:1.) Why does God set such a premium on faith? Why does he reckon us righteous on account of our faith? Why does he justify by faith rather than by one of the other graces? Why not by fortitude, patience, meekness, gentleness, humility; above all, why not by love? What is there in faith that gives it such value in God's sight?

Answer:

Faith is the root of all the other graces; it is in faith that they have their origin.

If in our hearts we have true faith, the manifestation of all the other graces will appear in our conduct. Our lives will be, or will become, characterized by fortitude, patience, meekness, gentleness, humility, and love. If we have in our hearts not a dead, but a living, faith, we have in us the root of all the other graces; we have in us that which is already pregnant with them and which, in due time, under the guidance of and by the power of the holy spirit, will produce them all; whereas, if it were possible for our Christian life to begin with any one of them, ever love, or with all of them put together, without faith, their root, being in us, they would be without hope of reaching maturity, but must inevitably wither, when subjected to a sufficiently strong test.

The Apostle Peter brings this strikingly to our attention in his second Epistle, chapter 1, verses 5-8 (2 Pet. 1:5-8). There he shows the rounded-out, well-balanced condition in which a true Christian character matures. The picture he draws is somewhat obscured in our Authorized Version by a mistranslation, so that in that Version the passage reads: "*Add to your faith, virtue, and to your virtue, knowledge,*" etc. A better translation appears in the Revised Version. We are not to first mature faith and then to, our matured faith *add* virtue (or fortitude) and then to our matured fortitude *add* knowledge, etc. The word is much more vital than "add." The faith that we bring to the Christian life is to contain in itself the seeds which will produce all these graces. As faith grows, they will grow.

In your faith supply virtue (or fortitude) reads the Revised Version, and *in your fortitude knowledge,* and *in your knowledge self-control;* and *in your self-control, patience, or steadfastness, or endurance;* and *in your steadfastness, godliness,* and *in your godliness, brotherly kindness;* and *in your brotherly kindness, supply love.*

As further bearing on the fact that faith is the root of the other graces, we note the fine touch of spiritual wisdom which appears in the disciples' answer to the Lord, when he instructed them in regard to the duty of forgiveness: "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again unto thee, saying, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." - Luke 17:4.

Exceeding strain is this to put upon our patience, and to put upon our love offense crowding upon offense and injury upon injury till it has grown to a seven-fold affront. But the point of special interest just now is how the disciples received this instruction. Did they say: "Lord, it will take a great deal of patience before we shall have developed characters which will be able to do this, Train us in the secret of forbearance"? Or did they say: Lord, it is only when we greatly love, that we can forgive to such an extent. Increase in us therefore, this grace of love?

No! -- the Apostles did not thus reply. Instead they besought the Lord to increase their *faith*. (Luke 17:5.) They asked that the *root might be strengthened, to brace the tree* for such trial and resistance.

So must it be with us. When a great -trial comes into our lives, or when we are taxed with some unusual service, or called upon to take a larger share of fellowship in the burdens and sufferings of Christ, we may be as certain as were these disciples, that the surest way for us to be fit for the strain, is to have our faith strengthened; that we must *believe* more, if we would *do* more; that our rest in him must be in a deeper repose, a calmer and more sure trust, ere we can be greatly used in his dear service.

- P. L. Read.

Recently Deceased

Brother Charles Bowman, Johnson City, Ill. - (October).

Sister F. Easterford, Ilford, England - (January).

Sister Louise Hamilton, Brooklyn, N: Y. - (1950).

Brother P. S. L. Johnson, Philadelphia, Pa. - (October).

Sister Flora Linnell, Brooklyn, N. Y. - (October).

Sister Anna Pinney, Washington, D. C. - (October).

Convention Reflections

"God my Maker, who gives men songs of gladness in the night." - Job 35:10, Moffatt

The past year has witnessed a number of conventions in various parts of the country at which Institute speakers were privileged to serve. Of the larger ones, mention may be made of Cicero, Ill., Buffalo, N.Y., Brooklyn, N.Y., Lake Webster, Ind., Rochester, N.Y., Atlantic City, N. J., Sharon, Pa., Milwaukee, Wis., Toronto, Ont., St. Louis, Mo., and Chicago, Ill. To reminisce over these happy gatherings is not to make comparisons, for such would be odious. Where the Lord is present with his people, all assemblies alike are sanctified and precious. As there is "no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few," so neither is there to bless. No one who attended in his Masters spirit departed hungry from the bountiful tables. It is true, nevertheless, that the eight day Lake Webster assembly, sponsored by the Cicero Ecclesia may be considered the most outstanding of this years meetings. Termed the First Unity Convention, it expressed the all commendable motive of these brethren to provide a larger fellowship opportunity for all united on the two great fundamentals. The Lord did indeed "command the blessing." We are happy our brethren of Cicero are now busy in the details of preparation for the Second Unity Convention to be held in 1951, D.V. May the Lord prosper their efforts to his glory and his peoples' edification. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."

From personal experience and from reports, we can observe of all the conventions, a number of similarities. There was the same earnest endeavor by the speakers to promote the spiritual welfare of Zion, and a corresponding appreciation by the brethren ministered unto; the same warmth of brotherly fellowship diffusing like perfume the fragrance of Jesus Christ into each heart; the blessed sense of separation and seclusion from the world and its cares; the thoughts and words and prayers in sympathy for those unable because of infirmity and other reasons to gather in conventions as formerly; the increased number of greying heads, interspersed here and there *by young* faces, as joyful in their expressions as their seniors; the definite void occasioned by the absence of a loved one who had passed away since the last gathering; the many kindnesses extended by the local brethren to their guests; the anxious hovering in spirit over the strangers attending the public meetings held; the spontaneous and eager testimonies; the sadness of parting and the many hopes expressed of meeting with one another again. And above all was the sense of drawing nearer "Jordan's strand" in our "trav'ling through Immanuels ground to fairer prospects nigh"; the increased realization that for us there remaineth here no continuing city; that

"but thinly the veil intervenes
Between that fair city and me";

that we are rapidly nearing Home and the fruition of our hopes, "when by his grace we shall look on his face." Such and many, more have been our thoughts and joys in our, communion with saints, and this foretaste of that perfect gathering "over there" has spurred us into even a greater determination to make our calling and election sure, for

O! how sweet, it will be in that beautiful land,
So free from all sorrow and pain,
His songs on our lips, and His work in our hands,
To meet one another again.

- W. J. Siekman.

