

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## What Say the Scriptures?

**Basic Bible Studies No. 6 - The Messianic Promise**

*"I have laid help upon One that is mighty." - Psalm 89:19.*

OUR studies have now considered the creation of man, the original transgression, and the Divine subjection of the human race to experience sin's consequences. Adam's greater vitality could resist the working of death for 930 years, but each succeeding generation found the life-span steadily decreasing. Moses, 2000 years after the Fall, could reflect: "All our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:9, 10). Human life has become "a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). Death reigns triumphant through sin, suffering fills the earth, and "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." - Romans 8:22.

From this tragic aspect of human existence we turn with relief and expectation to the consideration of Bible statements which bespeak a glorious "time of restitution." For though the "creation" is helpless, the Creator is near, and has already taken steps to help. Witness the Psalmist's testimony"

"This shall be written for the generation to come:  
And the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.  
For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;  
From heaven did the Lord behold the earth;  
To hear the groaning of the prisoner;  
To loose those that are appointed to death;  
To declare the name of the Lord in Zion,  
And his praise in Jerusalem;  
When the people are gathered together,  
And the kingdoms,  
To serve the Lord." - Psalm 102:18-22.

Whatever be their local application, we glimpse in these remarkable words a Divine Plan of magnificent scope -- even the eventual redemption of all mankind. This has been the Creator's purpose from the beginning; and as soon as Adam's fall had made it necessary, the mercy of God foretold this redemption, and further, that it would center in a great Deliverer, a Messiah (Anointed One) who would "restore all things." Like a small stream ever increasing as its tributaries add to it, so the Messianic predictions multiplied until they foretold almost every circumstance in the life and character of the most extraordinary personage that ever appeared among men. They have marked out the precise time and place of his birth; they have described with wonderful exactness the distinguishing features of his office and character; they have displayed with equal beauty and truth the effects and consequences of his Advent. All converge in Jesus of Nazareth. "To him give all the Prophets witness" (Acts 10:43). "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him" (2 Cor. 1:20, R.S.V.). *The testimony of Jesus is*, clearly and evidently, *the spirit of prophecy* (Rev. 19:10). This is its ruling and vital principle. Divested of this, it loses its power. Viewed in this light, we behold in prophecy a harmony which delights, a grandeur which astonishes, and from the result of the whole arises such evidence as carries conviction to the understanding, giving basis for a hope sure and steadfast, an anchor of the soul.

The first foreview of mercy and deliverance through a personal Deliverer is embodied in the Divine words of sentence against Satan:

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." - Genesis 3:15.

These enigmatical words have been emphasized as the *Protevangelion*, or First Gospel, the original root-promise of God; and for all their brevity, express three most important truths:

(1) The *coming* of a Seed, and that *not* of Adam, but of Eve. The wonderful significance of this emphasis upon the woman will become apparent in our later study concerning the Ransom Sacrifice.

(2) The *suffering* of this Seed, which experiences injury, though' not vitally, from the Serpent.

(3) The *triumph* of the Seed, in the bruising (crushing) of Satan's "head." St. Paul alludes to this destruction in Romans 16:20: "The God of peace shall bruise [margin: tread] Satan under your feet shortly."

Such is the original Promise, given to Adam and Eve ere they were driven from the Edenic home. Like the acorn the oak, it frames the mighty growth of later revelations.

Sixteen centuries later, the prophetic words of Noah (Gen. 9:25-27) limit the Messiah's lineage to the race of Shem

"Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

"God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."

Thus the patriarch foresaw in the main outlines of the three great branches of this second family of man

- (1) For the descendants of Ham, *servile degradation*.
- (2) For Japheth's posterity, *vast enlargement and political supremacy*.
- (3) For the race of Shem, *religious supremacy and sacred renown*.

Some five hundred years pass. The Bible, ignoring human events in general, confines its records as a whole to the line of human beings through whom the Divine purpose shall be accomplished; and thus to Abraham, the Semitic patriarch, is communicated the third expansion of the Messianic Promise. To this venerable person the glorious prediction is now confirmed with an oath:

"By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord.... that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; . . . and *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*" - Genesis 22:15-19.

It is a noteworthy fact that the faith of Jews, Arabs, and Christians in the One Living God is traceable back to this towering figure. The three greatest religions are thus of Semitic origin. All worship the God of Abraham.

Four hundred years later we reach the glory of Moses, whose wonderful life was truly a prototype of the greater Deliverer. His words to the nation of Israel are directly predictive of the Messiah

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, *like unto me*; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). This "likeness" may be better appreciated by considering the following parallels\* from the many that could be drawn:

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\*See also January-February 1965 *Herald*.

- (1) Moses and Jesus both were saved from violent death in infancy.
- (2) Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to suffer afflictions and death for his people. Jesus refused to be made a king for the same reason.
- (3) Moses contended with the magicians, who acknowledged his divine power. Jesus contended with the evil spirits, who acknowledged him as "the Holy One of God."
- (4) Moses was a lawgiver, a prophet, a worker of miracles. Jesus was also, and greater.
- (5) Moses gave the people bread in the wilderness. Jesus fed the thousands, and will yet feed the world with "living" bread.
- (6) Moses had power over the sea. Jesus "rebuked the sea, and there was a great calm."
- (7) Moses was the meekest of men. Jesus was "meek and lowly of heart."
- (8) Moses slew the paschal lamb. Jesus was "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

(9) Moses ratified a covenant with blood. Jesus' blood ratified the "everlasting covenant."

(10) Moses was victorious over kings and nations. Jesus is King over all the world.

(11) Moses raised a brazen serpent in the wilderness. Jesus was raised on the cross.

(12) Moses was a nation's mediator. Christ is the world's mediator.

In David, Israel's great king, the line of descent of the Coming One is narrowed to a chosen family of Judah's tribe. David is called a prophet by the Apostle Peter, and the "sure mercies" promised him are wondrously embodied in Psalms prolific in their reference to the Messiah. Therein we learn that:

(1) David's seed was to be enthroned forever.

(2) The Kingdom of his illustrious descendant was not to be merely Jewish, but universal.

(3) The King would be David's Son (first human), yet David's Lord (then spirit).

(4) This King, before his enthronement, would undergo rejection and suffering; death and resurrection.

(5) This King would, like Melchizedek, exercise priestly functions.

Later, the great Prophets of Israel enlarged on the Messianic Promise, even to minute details. The revelations through Daniel, the "beloved of Jehovah," are in some respects the most remarkable in the Old Testament. Here we find a twice stated prediction of four great empires, succeeded by the Kingdom of God; we learn of Israel's eventual restoration, of the resurrection of the dead, and of other great events linked with the Messiah. From Daniel we learn the exact chronology of the Advent and also that Messiah would "be cut off, but not for himself."

The actual coming of the Savior in the Babe of Bethlehem occasioned glorious utterances still further illuminating the Messianic Hope. These we find in the angelic messages to Zacharias (Luke 1:17), to Mary (Luke 1:28-35), to the shepherds (Luke 2:10-14), in the prophetic words of Zacharias (Luke 1:67-79), and Mary (Luke 1:46-55), and in Simeon's prayer (Luke 2:28-32, 34, 35). All were preeminently a theme of exultant joy and rhapsodical praise, yet mingled with a faint note of solemn sadness. For the Holy Child born into the world was destined, by the grace of God, to die for all men.

To enhance our appreciation of the Messianic predictions, we subjoin a Scripture table of the principal prophecies (P.) and the record of their fulfillment (F.) in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

(1) That a Messiah would come:

P. Gen. 3:15: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

F. Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." See also 1 John 3:8.

(2) The Messiah's descent:

P. Gen. 9:26: "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Shem.

F. Luke 3:36: "Jesus . . . the son of Shem. "

P. Gen. 12:3; 22:18: "In thy [Abraham's] seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

F. Luke 3:34: "Jesus ... the son of Abraham."

P. Gen. 26:4: "In thy [Isaac's] seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

F. Luke 3:34: "Jesus . . the son of Isaac."

P. Num. 24:17: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." See also Gen. 28:14.

F. Luke 3:34: "Jesus ... the son of Jacob."

P. Gen. 49:10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,

nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

F. Luke 3:33: "Jesus . . . the son of Judah." See also Heb. 7:14.

P. Isa. 11:1: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." See also verses 2 to 5.

F. Luke 3:22: "Jesus . . . the son of Jesse." See also Rom. 15:12.

P. Jer. 23:5: "Behold, the days come, with the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch." See also Isa. 9:7; Ps. 133:11; 89:3, 4, 27.

F. Acts 13:23: "Of this man's [David's] seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus." See also Luke 3:31; Acts 2: 30; Luke 1:32.

(3) The place of the Messiah's birth:

P. Mic. 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem . . . out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler of Israel."

F. Matt. 2:1: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea." See also John 7:42.

(4) Messiah to be born of a virgin:

P. Isa. 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

F. Matt. 1:18: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." See also Luke 1:26-35.

(5) The flight into Egypt:

P. Hos. 11:1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

F. Matt. 2:14: "When he [Joseph] arose, he took the young child, and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt." See also verse 15.

(6) The Messiah should have a forerunner

P. Mal. 3:1: "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." See also Isa. 40:3 and Luke 1:17.

F. Matt. 3:1: "In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." See also Luke 7:27; Mark 1:2, 3; Matt. 3:11, 12.

(7) The Messiah a Prophet:

P. Duet. 18:18: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee."

F. John 6:14: "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." See also John 7:40; Luke 24:19; Luke 7:16.

(8) The Messiah to preach first in Galilee:

P. Isa. 9:1, 2: "In Galilee of the nations, the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light."

F. Matt. 4:12, 17: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." See also verses 13 and 16.

(9) The Messiah to receive God's spirit

P. Isa. 11:2: "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit' of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord."

F. Luke 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." See also Matt. 3:16, 17.

(10) The Messiah would perform great miracles:

P. Isa. 61:1: "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." See also Isa. 35:5, 6.

F. Matt. 11:4, 5: "Jesus . . . said, Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

(11) The Messiah was to enlighten men

P. Isa. 9:2: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

F. John 12:46: "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." See also Luke 2:32; Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8; John 8:12.

(12) The Messiah a Savior:

P. Isa. 59:20; 62:11: "The Redeemer shall come to Zion." "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold thy salvation cometh.' "

F. 1 John 4:14; Luke 2:11: "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." "Unto you is born . . . a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

(13) The Messiah a Shepherd:

P. Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:23: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." "I will set up one shepherd over them, . . . even my servant David." See also Ezek. 37:24.

F. John 10:14, 16; Heb. 13:20: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. Other sheep [that is, the Gentiles] I have which are not of this fold.... and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." "Our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep."

(14) The Messiah a Priest:

P. Ps. 110:4; Zech. 6:13: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." "He shall be a priest upon his throne."

F. Heb. 4:14; 2:17: "We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." "That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

(15) The Messiah a Sacrifice for sin:

P. Isa. 53:6, 10, 11, 12; Dan. 9:24: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. . . . He shall bear their iniquities. . . . He bare the sin of many." "To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

F. Eph. 5:2; 1 John 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:18: "Christ hath given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God." "He is the propitiation for our sins." "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

(16) The Messiah an Intercessor:

P. Isa. 53:12: He "made intercession for the transgressors."

F. Heb. 9:24; Rom. 8:34: "Christ ... is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Christ who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."



(17) The Messiah a King:

P. Ps. 2:6: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." See also Ps. 132:11; Isa. 9:6; 55:4; Jer. 23:5, 6; 30:9; Mic. 5:2; Hos. 3:5.

F. Luke 1:32, 33; "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever."

(18) Messiah's Kingdom superior to all others:

P. Ps. 89:27, 36; Dan. 7:14: "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.... His throne as the sun before me." "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion."

F. Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:21: "The Prince of the kings of the earth." "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come." See also 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16; Phil. 2:9.

To these larger features of the Messianic Promise can be added many details such as the manner of Messiah's public entry into Jerusalem (compare Zech. 9:9 with John 12:13, 14); his betrayal by a disciple (compare Ps. 41:9 with Mark 14:10); for thirty pieces of silver (compare Zech. 11:12 with Matt. 26:15); with which a potter's field should be purchased (compare Zech. 11:13 with Matt. 27:6, 7); Judas' office taken by another (compare Ps. 109:7, 8 with Acts 1:16-20); the accusation of false witnesses (compare Ps. 27:12; 35:11 with Matt. 26:60, 61); Messiah's silence when accused (compare Isa. 53:7; Ps. 38:13, 14 with Matt. 26:62, 63; 27:12-14); smitten and spat upon (compare Isa. 50:6 with Mark 14:65); hated without a cause (compare Ps. 69:4; Ps. 109:3-5 with John 15:23-35); suffered vicariously (compare Isa. 53:4 with Matt. 8:16, 17); was cruelly mocked and derided (compare Ps. 22:7, 8, 12, 13 with Matt. 27:39-43); was crucified (compare Num. 21:9 with John 3:14); numbered with transgressors (compare Isa. 53:12 with Matt. 27:38) given vinegar and gall (compare Ps. 69:21 with John 19:29); his garments divided and lots cast for his vesture (compare Ps. 22:18 with John 19:23, 24); not a bone of him broken (compare Ps. 34:20; Exod. 12:46 with John 19:32, 33); his hands and feet pierced (compare Ps. 22:16 with John 20:25-27); his side pierced (compare Zech. 12:10 with John 19:34, 37); dying with malefactors, is buried honorably (compare Isa. 53:9 with Matt. 27:57-60); rises from the dead (compare Ps. 16:10 with Matt. 28:9); ascends into heaven (compare Ps. 68: 18 with Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9).

The preceding is but a summary of the predictions concerning the Promised Seed of the Woman. Nevertheless if but one man had predicted all these, giving the time, place, manner, and other circumstances of the advent, life, doctrine, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah, his prophecies would be truly astounding, and the most wonderful thing in the world. But these prophecies, by a succession of men widely separated from each other by time and space, over a period of four thousand years, foretell the same stupendous event. Here, therefore, the hand of God is manifest; and the variety of circumstances predicted concerning one person so many years before he was born, and of such an extraordinary nature—all accomplished in Christ, and in no other person that ever appeared in the world—point him out with irresistible evidence as the Messiah,

THE SAVIOR OF MANKIND.

- *W. J. Siekman*

(The subject of the seventh article in this series will be: "*The Ransom Sacrifice.*")

## "He is Precious"

### PART II

*"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious." - 1 Peter 2:7*

HAVING sketched in a brief way a small portion of the background of this Epistle in the previous article, we may now, be a little better'; equipped to come to grips with Peter's declaration that an exceeding great honor had been extended by': God to all believers when he invited them, as living', stones, to become allied and associated with his dear Son, whom he had designated as the prime foundation stone.

The suggestion was made that those whom Peter addressed directly, were of Israel stock, of ten tribed descent, and that they had allied themselves previously with the ancient system of worship and government situate in Jerusalem, and stood before God's and men as though they were men of purely. Jewish stock. They had no national birthright of their own, their ten-tribed polity being at this time in a state of dissolution. Politically, some among them had assumed or accepted Roman citizenship (like the parents of Paul in Tarsus) or had associated themselves with other people among whom they dwelt, but religiously they had paid allegiance to the priestly hierarchy resident at Jerusalem and shared with the home-born Jew the benefits and satisfactions deriving from the Temple services. Hence, while not truly Jews-of Judaic stock-they had shared with the Jews their national standing and outlook.

So much was this the case that Peter presented to them the outlines of the Gospel to the Circumcision in his effort to restore and re-establish them in "the true grace of God." (1 Pet. 5:12.) "This is the true grace of God, stand fast in it, was his earnest plea. We have before us in the Epistle (as in the Book of Hebrews also) a really classic statement of the Gospel of the Circumcision (Gal. 2:7) as committed by the Lord to Peter, and which he had consistently proclaimed from his early days till now. Let comparison be made between that first Pentecostal address (Acts 2:14-36) and the next two addresses recorded in Acts 3 and 4, and the language of this letter, and it will be found that some seven or eight distinct phrases are repeated by the pen, which had been spoken by the lips in those former days.

And yet, though as an Apostle to the Circumcision, he had presented the Gospel of the Circumcision to these former members of the Circumcision, he nevertheless supplemented and supported the teachings of his beloved Brother Paul, the appointed Apostle to the Uncircumcision, most forcefully and appropriately by a telling passage quoted from Isaiah's prophecy. Presumably he wanted to impress his readers with the fact that the Apostolic teachers in the Church were not divided in their teachings, and that though by force of circumstances, as well as for the sake of convenience they had to speak of Circumcision and Uncircumcision, really, there was no difference between these parties so far as salvation and reconciliation were concerned. Both sections, if among, the "saved," had to be saved 'by the "grace of God," by Jesus' blood and by an acceptable appropriating faith. (Rom. 3:25.) Peter stressed this by pen as he did by word of mouth. Both sections were being called of God in the one hope and the one calling, and both were called on exactly the same terms of full surrender. There was thus no difference in that which they were being saved "for," nor in that which they were being saved "by." The only difference lay in what they were saved "from." The Uncircumcision were being saved from their heathen darkness and their servile demon-worship; the Circumcision from "a vain conversation [or vain manner of life and conduct] received by tradition from their fathers." (1 Pet. 1:18.) A

pointed and classic example of the Gospel of the Uncircumcision may be found in Acts 17:22-31; of the other in Acts 7:2-53, and of course Acts 2:14,39, with special reference to verse 40 also.

But this salvation from their vain manner of life was the great snag in their way of approach to Christ. Few indeed were found at any time ready to concur with Peter's declaration to the Council at Jerusalem that the Law and Constitution of Sinai was a "yoke" which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear. (Acts 15:10.) Few likewise would agree with Paul that the Law was a cancelled bond (Col. 2:14) or that it was constituted of "beggarly elements" (Gal. 4:9) or that it was just a childhood's pedagogue (Gal. 3:24) or that its ritual and service were "faulty" (Heb. 8:7) and "ineffective" (Heb. 9:9; 10:1) and in every way "weak through the flesh." (Rom. 8:3.) To the orthodox and pious Jew the Law was "perfect," the source of all true light and understanding, the proper subject for all reverential meditation, day and night, the sum and substance of all divine revelation which God, the great Creator, had been pleased to make known. The very heavens and earth had been created in order to make possible its expression -- so the Rabbis taught -- and the resplendent heavenly hosts looked down with great desire to learn and understand a little of what had been written therein.

Had it not been given by the Most High himself .amid the splendors of Sinai, to them and to their children forever (*olam*), and had not God again and yet again visited the sternest retribution upon king and peasant, priest and layman who had violated its requirements? Had God not watched over its disciplines, night and day, for generations and for centuries since their fathers fell asleep?

How then could Paul or Peter or Stephen or any one else dare to speak of "change," of supersession, or of something "better"? Could there be anything better than that which, once given, had stood for centuries while kings and peoples rose and fell?

That was just the crux of a most searching test on the whole house of Israel at home and abroad. That such "change" was intended is demonstrated in many ways, as when Moses foretold the rise of another Prophet like unto him whom the people must hear under pain of banishment or death; or again, as when Isaiah spake of One, a Man of Sorrows, who would make his soul an offering for sin; a beast, though perfect in every respect, being no longer acceptable in the divine sight; or yet again when Jeremiah spake with hope and confidence of a "new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" under which their sins would really be forgiven and the Law written in the heart. These are but three out of the many indications which for centuries had been blazoning the fact that a "change" must take place ere that which was perfect, or that which could make men perfect, could come. A reformation in root and branch had for long centuries been premeditated, foretold, and fore-arranged.

Peter himself brings forward one such announcement from the prophecy of Isaiah, and by its exposition makes known his own point of view, and in the same act, buttresses and supplements the contentions of his beloved. Brother, Paul. Quoting Isaiah 40:6-8, Peter reminds his hearers that "all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." Peter recognized this passage, with much to be found in its context, as having the beginning of its application and fulfillment in John the Baptist's ministry. He was "the voice in the wilderness" announcing and preparing the way of the Lord, the outcome of which in the far distances of time was to bring forth the glory of the Lord, a revelation of which should be seen by "all flesh" the wide world over.

But meantime, what would the course of the ages show? All flesh as grass, growing up in rich and verdant beauty only to fall and fail and wither beneath a torching sun! But is that all the Prophet foretells or that Peter repeats? If so, was not Peter demeaning his argument by uttering the eeriest

platitudes? Did it need the aid of an inspiring spirit to utter such an obvious commonplace? Had not even pagan poets and philosophers long since drawn the same comparisons between the frailty of human flesh, and the brevity of the lush grass? And that without the enlightenment of Inspiration! But there is more than that in Isaiah's words to Israel. The commanding "voice" draws a contrast (verses 6, 7) between "all flesh" and "the people," and though *both are* as grass, the contrast is fundamental and frequent throughout the whole length of Hebrew history. "The people" stands over in contrast with "the peoples" repeatedly, "the nation" over against "the nations" continuously. Of the identity of "the people" and "the nation" there can be no doubt; of "the peoples" and "the nations" we are not left in uncertainty. "The people" is the Hebrew people; "the peoples" are "all flesh" -- the Gentile universal fringe around the pivot center of Israel.

Yet another contrast is with the word of God, which unlike its opposites was to stand (or abide) forever. And Peter said, "This is 'the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.'" (1:25.) What had been preached to his readers to fulfill this application by Peter of Isaiah's Messianic prophecy? Was it merely that "all flesh" should continue to die like grass? or that even "the people" (Israel) should die like grass? Let "all flesh" here stand for Gentile supremacy -- like grass, rich, verdant, and lush-the Gentiles in all their stretch of power, glory, and authority; and "the people" stand for Jewish privilege, advantage, and exclusiveness (Rom. 9:4, 5) and then witness the "voice's" forecast concerning the change which ensues when once "the breath of the Lord blows upon it." - Isa. 40:7.

In between the Baptist herald's voice in the wilderness and the display on the horizon of time, of the glory of the Lord, lay at least two days of visitation when the breath of the Lord (the spirit of the Living God) would blow upon "all flesh" -- a Gentile visitation at the termination of the Gentile Times, and a Hebrew (Jewish) visitation when the spirit of I the Lord would blow upon "the people" and they, with all their special privileges, would wilt and wither as the fragile grass. Such was the state of things proclaimed and preached by Peter and by Silvanus and by Paul. But alongside this another proclamation had gone forth. Isaiah had said that "the word of our God shall stand for ever"; Peter, under inspiration, had amended it, and told his brethren that "the word of the Lord *endureth* forever." Amid all the changing scenes of time and experience, one thing stands firm, unchanged, and unchangeable-and that one thing had been preached, and was being preached unceasingly. All fleshly glory (Gentile or Jewish) was withering away like mown grass, but the glory of the Lord, seen only by the eye of faith amid present circumstances, would endure to eternity.

This was the "word" that was being preached by all who knew and understood the change that had come. The day of type and shadows, the day of Jewish privileges, the day of Rabbinic tradition and authority was at an end, and the day of that which was superseding them had arrived, and these twin facts had been and were being effectively proclaimed. Peter hastened to assure his brethren that the change that had come was fundamental-eternal; it had delivered them from a vain conversation (or rather a vain manner of life) received by tradition from their fathers, and it had brought them into touch with a new source of life. They had been begotten again, not now of a corruptible seed, but of an incorruptible one, and the power that had fecundated their souls was eternal. There would be no more change, save as that which was mortal would in due time be swallowed up of immortality. And for that great consummation of hope and expectation they were being "kept" of God until "the last time"-the climax of the Christian Age.

Yes indeed, there was much more 'than obvious platitude in Peter's application of Isaiah's prophecy. Its waters were made to run at two different levels, one on the surface, the other deep below, and it was the deeper flow that gushed forth from the holy spirit's guidance and illumination.

Here perhaps is a lesson for those who always treat the sacred text with stark literality and fail to remember that the Word of God has treasures of wisdom laid up only for the meek of the earth. The proud hearted "intellectual" and the pious "meek" may both sit with the-Bible on their knees, both may read exactly the same words from its printed page; to one it is jargon, to the other "truth"; to one it is meaningless, to the other light. Why is this? Where are the treasures of wisdom stored up, if not in that deeper flow of thought which comes only at the holy spirit's illumination? We do well to learn that there is in Scripture research something more than the strict literal handling of text and context, a something that springs from the "analogia" of faith, the inner living core of truth and verity. We may not always have the deeper flow stated in so many exact and precise words, and so apparently we may not seem to-have a text in proof, but the cohesive logic of the truth behind the words requires, at times, a little more than is stated in the words (as here in Peter's exposition of Isaiah's prophecy) to make spiritual sense. The "letter" of the thing may "kill," the "spirit" of it may make "alive. And it is the spirit of the "word" that matters most to those who seek 'the Truth in all its depth and beauty.

Yes, there was indeed to be a change -- a great change in the outworking of the Plan. Isaiah had long ago foretold that in the coming years the breath (the spirit) of the Lord would breathe upon the fleshly; things and set over against them "spirituals"; breathe upon a carnal institution, and supplant it with al spiritual organization; breathe upon the whole Mosaic economy and supersede it with an eternal Christian dispensation. And he knew his readers would] understand and accept his exposition of the ancient prophecy as a revelation of new light suited to the day and hour.

With that observation we can pass right inward to the heart of our text. Quoting again from Isaiah's inspiring prophecy, he reminds his brethren that God, long ago, proposed to lay in Zion a new foundation stone, a stone select, precious, tried, and safe, on which, he that believed should not be put to shame. Here also is the thought of "change," of a super-session of the "old" by what is "new." But in this case the "new" is built upon the framework of the "old." "Zion"; was an old conception, precise and well. understood, Zion was the governmental heart of the old Jerusalem, the seat of its power and authority, in the earth. The throne of the Lord was there; from thence is Law went forth to all the faithful in Israel.

Zion as still to remain as Zion in the counsels of the Lord it was still to be his royal seat. His Law should still proceed from its glorious height, but his habitation, his house, should be built anew. Hence the proclamation of the prophecy, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." Peter again, under holy spirit's guidance amends the text a little and quotes it: "Behold, I ay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect; precious: and he that believeth on him [or it] shall not be put shame."

There was no doubt in his mind as to the individual identity of that "stone," for again, he quotes the Psalmist's prophecy that that stone would have been rejected by the builders of the national house ere it was made the headstone of the corner. Yes! that tried and sure foundation stone was Jesus, of that Peter had no doubt. He had heard his Master use that latter text in one of his many controversial contacts with the Pharisees with such telling emphasis that the interpretation and application thereof had so imprinted itself upon his mind that it was impossible for him ever to forget it. (Matt. 21:42, 43.) He also had heard the forceful parable preceding the Master's quotation and question, in such wise that it imprinted itself upon his memory once for all.

What, then, is the implication in the major prophecy as we read it in Isaiah's graphic phrase? First, that Zion is a term standing for more than a geographical site in old Jerusalem. It is a term descriptive of the throne of the Lord, with an appointed King upon that throne, and with an

ordered form of government emanating therefrom towards all the subject peoples of the Lord. Thus had it been in Israel's palmiest days -- the days of David and Solomon, and thus is it to be interpreted and applied in the better days to come when Israel is again restored and the tabernacle of David again set up.

But a new House of God is to be erected upon that age-old concept -- a new King is to reign in righteousness, a new syllabus of law is to go forth which will be written in the hearts of men. And the first step towards that nobler, better system had already been taken, the selected and tried foundation stone had already been laid when God raised up Jesus from the dead. Foundation other than that could no man lay (1 Cor. 3:11), for this was laid by God.

Despite the fact that the Temple still stood, and that Sanhedrin rule still emanated from the old metropolitan hill in Jerusalem, Peter pressed upon his readers the great fact that the new establishment had begun. Mount Zion, in another sense, had already begun, and though unseen by human eyes, was actually, in heaven's regard accounted a living, bright reality. The seen and visible was but a shadow, the unseen and invisible was the actuality, and henceforth the course mapped out by heaven, through the coming days and centuries, would be to cause the seen and visible to disappear and the unseen and invisible to enlarge and grow till it was ready to fulfill its allotted task. Within the precincts of a New Jerusalem-a city holy to the Lord-a new and spiritualized Zion would appear to carry on the work envisaged in the old-time metropolis, but on a loftier and grander scale, and send forth the Law to all the far corners of the earth.

Knowing all this, Peter voiced and directed his urgent appeal to his kinsmen after the-flesh to make sure of understanding the situation as it truly was, in heaven's sight, and not be beguiled back to the' old institution centered in Jerusalem. "Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men, but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built up a spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:4, 5, R.S.V.) , for to you "who believe is the honor" of being cemented and bonded into oneness with the elect and precious corner-stone already laid, while to those of you who disbelieve, and are thus unready for the "change" now taking place; that corner-stone shall become a stumbling stone.

This, then, is the Gospel for the Circumcision, presented and applied by the principal Apostle of the Circumcision, to win and bind his kinsmen to the Lord. Is it therefore another Gospel, a different Gospel from that presented to the Gentiles by the Apostle of the Uncircumcision in other parts of the earth? Can it mean that there is one Gospel for the Jew and another for the Greek? Not a bit of it.

The salient facts concerning the tried corner-stone are applicable to the Gentile equally with the Jew. The only difference lies in the first approach; and there, things which were historically and nationally true of the Jew had no precise application to the Gentile in any shape or form. The Jew (or Hebrew) likely to be affected by the Gospel call had been God fearing men, but their , life had been encased in a rigid traditional mold, from which it had been impossible to escape; while the Gentile had been tainted through and through with demonic idolatry and all its shameful lusts, and was without God in the world. Both were set free by the cross of Christ, but were set free from different thralls; both were invited to believe in the same Christ, the same sacrifice, and both by the same kind of faith.

Thenceforth their lives ran in parallel; both had the same call, the same hope, the same Lord, the same God and Father, but to engage the attention of the Jew (the Israelite) the ancient Scriptures must be made the basis of the appeal, and only as they could be interpreted to show the sufferings of the Christ (the coming Messiah), could their interest be aroused enough to persuade them to

accept the Crucified Man of Calvary as that Messiah. Hence the stress laid on the death and resurrection of the Lord in the early chapters of The Acts, and in this letter by Peter to his kinsmen in the five provinces of Asia Minor.

The Gentile had no such history and no such records as, the Sacred Scriptures of Israel, hence, no appeal could The made to them in that way. The appeal was to a God giving fruitful seasons and copious rains, satisfying thus the hearts of men (Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31), a God superior in every way to the multitudinous "vanities" which had gendered fear and superstition in their darkened minds.

But irrespective of whence they came, each believer was honored of the Most High God, in that he was called to link his life and service into that of His first-born Son.

Having briefly etched the background to Peter's letter to his Hebrew brethren we may now feel free to use his words of exhortation to our own edification and comfort, though not of former Hebrew stock. With the few exceptions (already noted) not exactly applicable to us of Gentile descent, we may take all in Peter's words and apply them to ourselves with the same exactness and precision that the Hebrew could, and find ourselves constrained to greater earnestness and fervency in our surrender to the Lord in consequence.

We too, by his grace, have been constituted "living stones" -- a designation at once unique and extraordinary, inasmuch as building stone is not alive, nor can the artifice of the mason or the builder make it so. Building material suited to their craft is dead, inert, earthy; building material for God's handiwork is living, vitalized, and heavenly. Already, in one sense, as Peter says, these stones have become "living stones by the holy spirit's vitalizing activities. As such they are just the right material for the Living God, as Architect and Builder of the New Jerusalem, to bond and cement together with his well-beloved Son into a habitation for himself. Herein lies the honor to each living stone. Could we watch the mason and the builder going over their material, eyeing with particular care the grain and density of each stone, approving this, rejecting that, we would form a right conception of the honor arising from their choice. Stone of even grain and texture accepted and approved for a place in the edifice; stone of broken grain or faulty texture discarded and rejected as unfitting for the work--so would one The honored and accounted valuable, the other dishonored and accounted waste.

Thus the living stones taken from the quarry-beds of both Hebrew and Gentile stock, pass beneath the scrutiny of God to be honored or rejected, as the case may be. Each one, ere its place in the great House of God shall be assured, needs to be prepared; to be cut and shaped so that its lines and angles will accord with the lines and angles of the great foundation Stone already laid. What if the stress and strain of chiseling and tooling should reveal its hidden flaws? What if removal of some of its excrescences should cause it to crack and split? Would it then be worthy of a place in the edifice? Even though accepted at the first scrutiny, it must now be accounted "castaway" material. So with the "living stones." Even now the Dispersion Hebrews were accounted as God's "elect" (1 Pet. 1:1), material of the first scrutiny, and accepted as such for the shaping and tooling processes, but subject again to continuous and to final scrutiny ere they would be accounted suitable for a place in the House of God. They must be able to stand those shaping processes right through to the end to be worthy of inclusion in the Holy Edifice.

Thus they already had attained, by their faith, to the honor arising from a first scrutiny; -to an even greater honor in that the Master-mason still continued to work on them; with an infinitely greater and more excellent honor awaiting them when the Builder bonded and cemented them into the eternal Habitation he was preparing for himself and his heavenly Kingdom.

Who can assess and estimate 'aright the honor conferred upon us, by our God, in that he has separated us from the stone-pits of this world, and has set us aside for the' necessary chiseling and tooling day by day?

Who can tell or define the honor bestowed upon us every passing day, in that for our faults and frailties he, does not cast us off as scrap, as waste, as castaway material, unfit for further care or effort on his part, but rather works on and on with patience and persistence, till the shape and texture needed begin to star d clear before his approving gaze.

And, so will he continue to work upon those who lie passive in his hands until he has made them what he desires and purposes them to be! But oh! the honor of it all the exceeding greatness and preciousness of his grace which makes it all possible. May we continue to lie passive in his hands, that he may count 'us worthy of his masonic care, until his work is done, and we are made ready for a place in his Mount Zion dwelling-place. "Unto you therefore that believe is the honor" -- honor for today and for the eternal years to come.

- *T. Holmes, Eng.*



## Covenant People

*"I will make a compact of peace with them, a lasting compact; I will settle them and multiply them and set my sanctuary among them for all time; my dwelling-place shall be with them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and when my sanctuary remains among them for ever, the nations shall learn that I am the Eternal who sets Israel apart." - Ezek. 37:26-28.*

EVENTS OF the passing days and hours portend the long-promised Messianic Kingdom. The Gospel Age is ending. Israel's dispersion has turned into home-coming. Partial blindness has obscured God's favor to Israel for nearly two thousand years, but now, his recorded word is being fulfilled: "Before they call I will answer."

The summary removal of the crown and diadem from Zedekiah put an end forever to the man-kings in Israel. God ordained that David's throne should be occupied by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, not a mere man but the promised Messiah. The human kings of Israel were not of God's purpose, but permitted of him at Israel's insubordinate request. Doubtless the desire for a human king was prompted by the tinselled pageantry, pomp and show of neighboring Gentile nations. Israel was specifically warned that in their request they were rejecting God as their king, which would add to their sorrow and distress. Perhaps this permission to Israel, like the seven, times of Gentile dominion, was to demonstrate finally, the futility of heady ineptitude and insufficiency of human ability. The wisdom of God is far above the feeble might of men, and soon all will realize that Moses spoke the truth when he said: "Every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed." -Acts 3:22-26.

The first covenant people, in point of time, was natural Israel. That covenant was described in Scripture as a marriage with God. Israel broke the covenant, but God did not put her away permanently. (See Isa. 50:1 and Jer. 31:31-34.) Gentiles, as the name implies, have never had a covenant with God. All who come into the favor of God must become Israelites. (Rom. 9:4; Micah. 4:22.) The promised blessing of all the families of the earth greatly concerned natural Israel; they looked forward to the privilege of becoming the "blessed nation" under the Law. Human imperfection made it impossible to keep the Law inviolate, although repeatedly, year after year, they were permitted to make the attempt, but the blood of bulls and goats could never bring perfection. - Heb. 10:4.

Israel failed her covenant, failed to see "the new and living way" when Jesus, a Jew, offered himself. They rejected him then, but thanks to God it did not affect his status as their prophet, priest, and king, with the power of life in his hands. Jesus came unto his own, he did not come to the Gentiles, and obviously he does not return to the Gentiles. He said, *"I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* The Lord was not contradicting the angels, who announced to the shepherds on the Galilean hills, that the birth of Jesus was "good news of great joy to all people." The simple fact is: there is a due time for the Gentiles, they cannot be recipients of God's favor and blessing as a nation until they come into, the Kingdom for which we have long prayed, "Thy kingdom come."

Provision was made in Israel's covenant for the adoption of strangers into their midst with full privilege and fellowship; picturing the fact that all mankind are to be incorporated into the Kingdom of the Messiah. The word "gentile" means outsider. The "tabernacle of David" is of the chosen people; it has fallen down, but God will set it up again with the Messiah upon the throne and "it will be the desire of all nations." In the sight of God there is no Gentile Christian Church,

nor Jewish Christian Church, simply Church-the Body of Christ. One arrangement for all "One God and one mediator between God and men." Every subject of the Kingdom who gets eternal life will become an Israelite -- a prince with God.

Israel's return to the homeland is evidence, *prima facie*, that the preparation of the earthly phase of the "stone" kingdom is in advanced process. Gentile dominion must give way, in fact it is breaking up. Jeremiah 25:31-38 very concisely puts the matter:

"A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for Jehovah hath a controversy with the nations; he will enter into judgment with all flesh: as for the wicked, he will give them to the sword, saith Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest shall be raised up from the uttermost parts of the earth. And the slain of Jehovah shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the face of the ground. Wail, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow in ashes, ye principal of the flock; for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are fully come, and ye shall fall like a goodly vessel. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and the wailing of the principal of the flock! for Jehovah layeth waste their pasture.

In parlance of the sacred Scriptures, Israel was "a lovely spreading olive tree," of God's planting. (Jer. 11:16, 17, *Moffatt*.) Paul calls the Gentiles a "wild olive," thus indicating they were outside covenant relationship with God. The Lord never changes his Plan. The covenant made with Abraham was bound with an oath. The faithfulness of God is sure, despite human unfaithfulness and for this Divine characteristic we are all thankful. Israel has been a people of much sorrow, dispossessed of prophet, priest, and king as well as of the tabernacle equipment necessary for the atonement day; but now, from every quarter of the globe, speaking languages strange one to the other, they come with one thought, one aim -- the peace and safety of home. This home returning people furnish a spectacle never before seen, on such a scale. Truly astounding! Enough to make the heart of a Christian pulsate with joy! Outstanding evidence of the Kingdom's proximity! Does it not seem miraculous that such strides can be made with such odds, in the very midst of rapidly declining world powers? For every slipping step of the kingdoms of this world, Israel forges forward a firm and steady pace. Without money, sick, hungry, and scantily clothed, Israel is returning; the lame, the halt, the blind, find sanctuary, food and clothing; rationed it is true, yet far more than they received in the DP camps of Europe. The Eternal promised, "Though I make a full end of all nations, whither I have scattered thee, I will not make a full end of thee."

Israel's return is providential. Isaiah says (Isa. 40:10): "Here is the Eternal coming in, power, maintaining mightily his cause!" God gives a commission to some of his servants to help returning Israel. The same Prophet says: "Console my people, console them -- 'tis the voice of your God -- speak to Jerusalem tenderly, proclaim to her that her hard days are ended, her guilt paid off, that she has received from the Eternal's hand full punishment for all her sins. Hark! there is one calling, 'Clear the way for the Eternal through the waste, level a highroad for our God across the desert: every valley must be filled up, every mountain and hill lowered, rough places smoothed, and ridges turned into a plain and the Eternal's glory shall be revealed before the eyes of all; such are the orders of the Eternal. Up to the high hills, O herald of happiness to Zion! Raise your voice loudly, O herald of happiness to Jerusalem, raise it fearlessly, and tell the towns of Judah, Here is your God! Here is the Eternal coming in power, maintaining mightily his cause! Here he is bringing what he has won, bringing what he has gained! For he feeds his flock like a shepherd, and gathers them in his arms, he is carrying the lambs in his bosom, and leading the ewes gently.'"

Jeremiah has this to say (Jer. 31:7-9): "Shout aloud to the hill-tops, ring out your praises, cry, 'The Eternal has saved his people, the remnant of Israel!'" "I am bringing them from the north land, gathering them from the ends of the earth; blind and lame among them, women with child and women in travail -- they come back, a great company. They went away in tears, I lead them back consoled. I guide them to streams of water, by smooth roads where they cannot stumble [airplane]; for to Israel I am a father, and Ephraim is my first-born son."

Surely what God has so copiously caused to be recorded concerning natural Israel and his covenant with her, demands, the most careful study by those who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. Israel has been blind to the fact that Elijah illustrates the Church, particularly in this end of the Gospel Age, and it would seem that others have overlooked the full picture. God is not mocked, he set Israel up as a lovely spreading olive tree. Paul says: "Some of- its branches were broken off," and branches from the wild olive were grafted into the root and stem of the same lovely spreading olive tree. As a nation, Israel' proved unfit to become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ as the seed of Abraham. The High Calling of God was to go out only to believers *in* Christ Jesus regardless of nation, race, color, or sex. The lovely spreading olive tree-the true seed of Abraham, is now seen as Christ Jesus and his Church *or* Bride. "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." This, a great mystery hidden from ages and generations and now made manifest, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The Apostle Paul could hardly convince the Jews that Gentiles were to share Divine favor with Israelites because they had so long possessed the exclusive favor of God. Peter was the first to be apprized of this unusual procedure, the first to see that the door of the *High Calling* was opened to all believers in Christ Jesus. In his first letter, 1 Peter 2:9, he says:

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth 'the praises of him who bath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

God's purposes were, not to be thwarted by failure of the human element, he simply resorted to the expedient of grafting -- a well known process of horticulture. The wild *olive* tree was not of God's planting, but there was nothing to hinder him from using some of its branches. The covenant *of* sacrifice or by sacrifice was initiated by our Lord and *will* continue until the Church is complete; the grafting process began with Cornelius, the Gentile centurion.

The Church, the second covenant people, first in order of rank, in God's arrangement, are to be rulers over the first. This seeming strange act of God was illustrated long ago, in the two sons of Isaac. Esau, the elder, served Jacob the younger; their parents, Isaac and Rebecca, were told by the angel, before the twins were born, that the elder would serve the younger. The question of inheritance, a touchy subject, put enmity between the brothers; in the end, the brothers were reconciled. Likewise between the two covenant peoples there has been a wide breach; they also will be reconciled.

The Royal objective in calling the second *holy nation* is joint-heirship with Christ in his Kingdom. In Romans eleven it is disclosed that grafting was necessary to obtain the foreordained number (144,000) which, as illustrated in the figure of the "tame olive tree," is God's arrangement for the fruition of his promise to Abraham. The, Apostle handles this touchy subject of inheritance with finality, disclosing the fact that there were some who contended that the Gentiles had supplanted Israel. He set them right in' this. Disparaging the spirit of boasting, he remind his

Gentile brothers that only through becoming Israelites could they partake of the fatness of the root and stem of the tree. The tree had not been uprooted; only some of its branches were broken off. He showed, furthermore, that the natural branches were not necessarily permanently removed:

"For if you have been cut away from the wild olive, which is naturally wild, and grafted contrary to nature, upon a garden olive, how much more will the natural branches be grafted into the proper olive? To prevent you from being self-conceited, brothers, I would like you to understand this secret, it is only a partial insensibility that has come over Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles be come in. This done all Israel shall be saved." - Rom. 11:24-26.

It is indeed gratifying to know that eventually all blind eyes will be opened, sincere good will, love, and satisfied acquiescence will prevail. Gentiles will be content and happy to receive the blessings of God through the restored tabernacle of David, which will be set up again, with the "true seed of Abraham" according to the promise. Imagine the great surprise of Israel, and perhaps the momentary chagrin of the Gentiles, when it is realized that up to the present, there has never been a Christian nation on earth, and Israel *is* destined to be the first, last, and only nation that can be designated a Christian nation. Israel only is to be even partially preserved, all other nations are to be eliminated, they themselves being their own executioners; and apparently they are in a hurry to get on with the job.

Israel will grow in favor with God as she aligns herself with God's program. The present government in Israel is a human effort to become a member of the galaxy of nations. We can but marvel at the progress they are making in view of the fact that their program is apparently somewhat counter to God's. Israel will soon discover that treaties with the kingdoms of this world will only add to her difficulties! and embarrass her leaders. Safety lies in complete acquiescence, in the Divine program, as they endeavor to *do* what they can for themselves.

The only reliable source of information available to them, at the present time, is the word of Moses, the Prophets, Jesus and his Apostles. Soon now their statesmen and wise men of old, *will* return from the grave and will be charged, by Divine mandate, with ordering the affairs of Israel under the rule of the Messiah.

God warns against reposing trust in a league of nations (Isa. 30:15, 16, 18-21)

"The Lord, the Eternal, Israel's Majesty, he had declared, 'Your safety lies in ceasing to make leagues, your strength is quiet faith.' But this you would not have, you answered, 'No, we must have a cavalry to make a charge!' . . . So the Eternal longs to favor you, and moves to show you pity; for the Eternal is a loyal God; happy are all who long for him! No more tears for you, O folk of Zion in Jerusalem! For, he will show you favor when you sigh, and answer you as soon as he hears your cry. Though scant and scarce may be your bread and water from the Lord, yet he your Teacher never leaves you now; you see your Teacher for yourselves, and when you swerve to right or left, you hear a voice behind you whispering, 'This is the way, walk here.'"

Zechariah also prophesies:

"They shall look at Him whom they stabbed and lament for him bitterly, as a man laments for his only son; bitter shall be their grief for him, as bitter as a man's grief for his first-born child." - Zech. 12:10.

The Bible from Moses to John was written by Israelites for Israel. The Church is no exception, for they become Israelites indeed. No true Christian can have racial prejudice, and they must love even their enemies. More dependence upon the Bible and less upon leaders, around whom there is a tendency to build a fence, keeping outsiders out and insiders in. Jeremiah says: "I am against prophets who pick up my words each from his fellow." - Jer. 23:30.

The privilege of prayer is to the household of faith. How can one say: "Our Father" if he is outside God's family? Israel once had access to God through the Aaronic priesthood, with the ephod, the ark of the covenant, and the furnishment of the tabernacle, but now they have no priest, no ephod with its jewels by which the "yes and no" answers came. Israel can have no atonement until Messiah. The tabernacle of David is Israel's contact with heaven, but even before it is set up, the Lord takes cognizance: He says: "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

Material is being gathered for the setting up of, the tabernacle. The present government of Israel, we might say, is an interim-government of their own device. When the Lord takes over, he will repair the breaches and establish a kingdom, not a democracy, as they boast at present. "They shall then call Jerusalem, 'the throne of the Eternal,' and all nations shall gather to it, living no longer by the stubbornness of their evil minds. In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and they shall come out of the north-land together to the land that I gave as a heritage to your fathers." - Jer. 13:17, 18.

Israel knows her destiny is directed by a power beyond her own, and it is perplexing, because she also knows that her restoration and blessing shall be at the hand of the Messiah. Open your eyes O Israel! Look up! He is from above and with all power, no longer a sacrificing priest but your *King*. For 'your fathers' sakes he will extend the arm of power in your behalf; yes, it is already extended! It would be well to remember the words of Moses that God would bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel. The spirit of good will, and fellowship between the two covenant-people should be after the order of Elijah and Elisha. "The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Amen.

- C. H. Meadors.

## The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

### 2 Samuel 6:1-12

*"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." - Matthew 6:9.*

THE special teaching of the incident of this lesson is the reverence of the Lord. "Holy and reverend is his name;" and "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." When God appeared unto Moses in the burning bush to speak with him, he commanded him, saying, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." So also when he appeared on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people of Israel, enveloped in a thick cloud, there were great demonstrations of awe-inspiring solemnity, and special restrictions to guard against any irreverent familiarity. Israel was also specially commanded to reverence his law and his sanctuary. -- Psalm 111:9 Exodus 20:7 Psalm 89:7 Exodus 3:5; 19:11-13 Leviticus 19:30.

Reverence is defined as a feeling of profound respect often mingled with awe and affection; a feeling of worshipful regard when directed to the divine or sacred: also conduct inspired by, or conformed to, such feeling. "The fear [reverence] of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10.) This is the only proper attitude of the creature toward the Creator, the Author of our being, and the Creator, Preserver and Lord of the whole universe. When he speaks, therefore our ears should be reverently attentive to his voice and every power alert to do his bidding. Our safety our happiness, and that nobility of character which prompts to love and gratitude, and which promptly and wisely heeds instruction and advances in knowledge and wisdom, all depend primarily upon our supreme reverence for the Lord. And therefore the Lord would foster and cultivate in us that becoming, filial reverence that is due to his name.

The ark of God was the symbol of the divine presence in Israel, and as such it was the most sacred thing about the typical tabernacle. It was made by divine direction, as was everything belonging to the tabernacle and its place was in the holy of holies, where only the high priest (who represented Jesus, the great high priest) was permitted to enter; and that only once a year, on the day of atonement. As the symbol of the divine presence, like the divine presence itself it was guarded from irreverent handling, and also from the common view. Only the priests, who typically represented the body of Christ, the saints of this age were permitted to see or to touch it. The Levites, who represented all justified believers of this age, were appointed solemnly and reverently to bear the ark when the Tabernacle was removed from place to place, but it must be first carefully covered by the priests; for even the Levites might not look upon it nor touch it. -- Numbers 4:15-20.

Previous to the event of this lesson religion was at a very low ebb in Israel, and for many years the ark of the covenant had been separated from its place in the tabernacle. As the visible symbol of the divine presence wherever the ark went the power and favor of God went with it; as, for instance, when Israel crossed over Jordan on dry land, the waters parting before them as soon as its bearers reached the brink of the river; and again when the walls of Jericho fell before it and Israel had a great victory. But when Israel sinned against God, no such power accompanied the symbol. It was even permitted to fall into the hands of their enemies and the Philistines were allowed to capture it while Israel suffered a great defeat. But though Israel was thus punished God did not long permit the sacred emblem of his presence to remain in Gentile hands, and the Philistines were punished for retaining it until they were glad to restore it again to Israel. In returning it there were no anointed priests among the heathen to cover it, nor Levites to bear it; so

the Philistines placed it upon a new cart, and left the oxen without a driver to take their own course, and God guided them back to the land of Israel, to Beth-shemesh. Thus was the ark restored to his people. But the people of Beth-shemesh ignoring the restrictions of the divine law with reference to the ark, presumed to look into it and God punished them with a great slaughter in which fifty thousand and seventy men perished. Thus they were taught to fear the Lord and to reverence his commandments and they said, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God, and to whom shall he [this symbol of his presence] go up from us? And they sent messengers to Kirjath-jearim....And the men of Kirjath-jearim came and fetched up the ark and brought it into the house of Abinadab...and sanctified Eleazer his son to keep the ark of the Lord." There it remained for twenty years. (1 Samuel 6:1-21; 7:1,2.) The Lord's dealings with Israel were on the lines of the Law Covenant made with them at Mount Horeb. The lesson to us of the New Covenant is that those favored by one part of God's covenants are held accountable proportionately. We are not, however, to think of those fifty thousand men as destroyed in the Second Death; for the trial of Israel under its Law Covenant was only typical, and did not decide the final destiny of all under it.

But when David was finally established upon the throne of all Israel he purposed to bring the ark up to Jerusalem, and to lead the people as a nation back to the hearty and reverent worship of God, the restoration of the sacred ark of the covenant being necessarily the first step to that end. He gathered together thirty thousand representative men of the nation thus to make the restoration a national act, and in so doing to call the whole people to a revival in the worship of God.

The method chosen for the conveyance of the ark to Jerusalem was not, however, according to the law which prescribed that it should be reverently borne by the Levites, but patterning after the example of the Philistines in returning it to Kirjath-jearim they set it upon a new cart drawn (probably) by oxen. While God tolerated the ignorance and inability of the Philistines who were not his people, to comply with the requirements of his law in this matter he did not so regard the forgetfulness or carelessness of Israel, but gave them a severe reminder of his displeasure. In the midst of the general joy and rejoicing with music of many voices and all kinds of instruments the sudden jostling of the cart seemed to endanger the position of the ark so that Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it when instantly he was stricken down dead.

This was a severe and a most necessary rebuke. It halted the procession, and was understood by the king and all the people as a rebuke to the whole nation in that they had ignored the commandment of the Lord and had failed to properly reverence the symbol of his presence. And the fear of the Lord fell upon the king and all the people; the music and the festivities were hushed; the multitudes dispersed and thoughtfully returned to their homes: and the king, fearing to continue his purpose of taking the ark to Jerusalem, turned aside and bore it to the house of Obed-edom, a Levite who doubtless reverently received it; for we read that in consequence "the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that he had." -- 1 Chronicles 13:13,14.

There the Ark remained for three months, while King David, still zealous for the Lord and anxious to lead the people to a closer observance of his worship was quietly studying the lesson of this strange providence. And it was told David, "The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God." Then David read the lesson clearly, and he determined to act upon it at once -- to carry out his original purpose of bringing up the ark to the chief, the capital city, to give it the chief place of honor in the whole nation, as he had before intended, and again to call the representatives of all the people together that the restoration might be a national act and lead to a great national revival of religion. But this time he would see to it that the symbol of the divine presence should be reverently borne according to the divine directions.

"And David made him houses in the city of David and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever...For because ye did it not at first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord. Thus all Israel brought up the Ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps." -- 1 Chronicles 15:1,2,13-15,28.

"And it was so that when they that bare the ark had gone six paces he [David] sacrificed oxen and fatlings and David danced before the Lord with all his might [another expressive symbol of joy], and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet." -- 2 Samuel 6:13-15.

While Israel was thus taught the reverence of the Lord, the lesson applies with equal force to the Church of the Gospel age. It is not our part to change one iota of the ordinances of God. We may not turn the ordinance of the baptism of believers into the sprinkling of infants, nor change the simplicity of the Lord's supper or the time of its observance as indicated by its superseding the celebration of the typical passover. Nor have we a right to abate the just requirements of his holy law, nor to render null and void the authority of his precepts and instructions in order to please the worldly-minded. The law and the testimonies of God must be received into good and honest hearts without regard to human philosophies and idle speculations. The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and blessed is the man that trusteth in him, and to whom a "Thus saith the Lord" is the end of all controversy on every subject.

"If our lives were but more simple  
We should take him at his word  
And our lives would be all sunshine  
In the sweetness of our Lord."

- *Reprints*, pp. 2002, 2003.

## Recently Deceased

Brother J. L. Cooke, Brooklyn, N Y. - (July).  
Brother C. C. Cowell, Brownwood, Texas - (June).  
Sister Carrie Crippen, Ypsilanti, Mich. - (Aug).  
Sister Lillian Crippen, Ypsilanti, Mich.- (Sept.).  
Sister Catherine Green, East Greenwich, Rhode Island - (May).  
Brother John D. Harper, Minneapolis, Minn. - (July).  
Sister W. Sumrow, Hieo, Texas - (June)..  
Brother Jacob Ruegsegger, Rome, N. Y. - (July).  
Brother Levi Truesdale, Dresden, Ontario - (May).