

# **THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM**

*VOL. XXXVIII June, 1955 No. 6*

## **The Typical Significance of Pentecost**

*"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, ..." - Acts 2:1.*

DURING the space of forty days following his resurrection our Lord Jesus showed himself alive to his disciples by many infallible proofs, speaking with them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. At length the time came for him to take his last leave of them and ascend to the Father. Just before doing so, he gave them final instructions. They were to return from Olivet to Jerusalem, there to remain until they had received the Promise of the Father. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Instead of perplexing themselves with questions as to when the Kingdom was to be restored to Israel, they were to expect an outpouring of the holy spirit which would fit them for the ministry -- that ministry in which angels would fain engage -- of carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth. "Ye shall receive power, when the holy spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1: 8).

They had not long to wait. When ten days had passed; as soon as the day of Pentecost had fully come, the promise of the Father was fulfilled. (Acts 1:1-12; John 15:26; John 14:17, 26; Acts 2:1).

## **ISRAEL'S SEVEN FEASTS**

The Feast of Pentecost was one of the seven "feasts" or "appointed seasons" or "holy convocations" of Israel, all of which occurred in the first seven months of their ecclesiastical year (Lev. 23:4, margin). First came the Feast of Passover, on Nisan 14. Next came the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days. On the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 16, the Feast of Omer, or presentation to Jehovah of the Sheaf of Firstfruits, took place. Fifty days thereafter came Pentecost, the very word "pentecost" meaning fifty. The remaining three festivals were all appointed for the seventh month, and were, respectively, those of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles.

## **THE FEAST OF PASSOVER**

Not only are the details of the ceremonies observed at these seven holy convocations full of meaning, but the order in which they took place is significant, revealing the sequence in which the various stages of God's great plan of redemption were to unfold themselves. Readers of this journal are well aware that the passover lamb was a type of our Lord Jesus. Indeed, in our "Memorial" celebration, we are reminded of this by the Apostle: "Christ [Jesus] our Passover [Lamb] is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

### **THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

We see, too, how this first feast stands related to the second as cause to effect, for if the paschal lamb sets forth the anointed Jesus as our Passover Lamb slain for us, in order to bring us pardon, peace, and new life, the feast of unleavened bread was designed to prefigure the holiness of that new life. From the moment the paschal lamb was slain, the Jew had to put away all leaven (type of sin) from his dwelling, and we read: "Whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (Ex. 12:15). So it is in the spiritual reality which the type prefigures. It is Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away our sins and brings us pardon and reconciliation; but associated with this truth is another: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19); or, as the Apostle, with the Old Testament type in mind, expresses it, "Christ [Jesus] our Passover [Lamb] is sacrificed for us, therefore [or, "so that"] we should keep the feast" -- the feast, namely, of unleavened bread, the bread of sincerity and truth.

### **THE SHEAF OF FIRSTFRUITS**

In the feast of Omer, or the presentation of the first sheaf of ripe barley to God, there is no doubt Israel was taught to acknowledge God's power and bountifulness, and thus by a representative "firstfruits" to consecrate to him the whole harvest. All the Jewish festivals were in connection with the natural seasons of the year; with the harvests which God gave unto his people; with the outward blessings with which he surrounded them. But here too the earthly and visible is the symbol of greater and deeper spiritual realities. There is another harvest field for the first ripe fruit of which the Lord of the harvest (Jehovah himself) had long been waiting; a harvest of which Christ Jesus was the firstfruits. "Now is Christ [Jesus] risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). It was on the third day after the Lamb of God was slain (after the corn of wheat which was not content to abide alone, but fell into the ground and died, that it might produce much fruit, John 12:24), that he arose again, and stood forth as the Branch of Jehovah for beauty and glory, and as the fruit of the earth for excellency and for comeliness to his redeemed people (Isa. 4:2, margin). In him we see a glorious new federal Head of our race, coming forth out of the earth, a Sheaf waved from the earth unto' God. Furthermore, when after his resurrection he ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God (John 20:17), it was not only to be accepted for us (Lev. 23:11); to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24); but also, as the pledge and earnest of the harvest to follow -- of the resurrection to life eternal of the whole family of the redeemed of earth.

### **THE FEAST OF PENTECOST**

But before this great harvest of earth's redeemed ones should be reaped, another "firstfruits" was to be presented. Thus St. James writes: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). In the glorious vision, St. John identifies these "firstfruits" as "an hundred forty and four thousand" standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, "having his [the Lamb's] Father's name written in their foreheads." "These," writes

St. John (Rev. 14:1-5), "were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

To this gracious feature of our Father's plans and purposes the Feast of Pentecost pointed.

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenths parts of an ephah; they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, for firstfruits unto Jehovah" (Lev. 23:15-18, A. R. V.).

In the light of the two New Testament Scriptures just quoted (James 1:18 and Rev. 14:5) this second "firstfruits" is seen to be full of typical and prophetic significance. The preparation and presentation of the loaves are doubtless emblematic of the Church, and set forth that part of God's Plan which has been in process during this Gospel Age, *and which is now, we believe, about to be consummated*. The true Corn of Wheat having fallen into the ground and died, it brought forth much fruit, and the result, as set forth in this type is bread -- two loaves which are waved and presented to Jehovah -- for not only is our Lord Jesus the true meal-offering in whom the Father ever finds delight, and who exhibited in the earth the habits and ways of heaven, but his people, his Ecclesia, also are constituted a new meal-offering unto God, that in them, too, traits of heavenly character might be found, and that so, the earth, sown with seed from the harvest field of spiritual Israel, might produce an abundant crop, to our Lord's and the Father's glory.

### **"TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH"**

Two or three significant points in connection with this "new meal-offering" as a figure of the Church, call for our reverent notice. First, in contrast to the Omer, or Sheaf of Firstfruits, presented on the 16th of Nisan, the "Bikkurim" (as this second firstfruit is called) consisted of *two* loaves.

Of the *duplicate character* of the emblems two explanations are worthy of special notice. One is that suggested by Brother Russell, as follows: "The two loaves . . . represented the two classes of the consecrated-the overcoming 'little flock,' and the 'great company' of the consecrated servants of God who do not make the 'high calling,' theirs by overcoming the world as they might and should do" (*Reprints*, R1289, R2271, R5191). The other explanation, presented by David Baron, is that which interprets the type as intended to set forth the two formerly irreconcilable elements - Jew and Gentile - made one in Christ.

Both of these explanations appeal to us as having merit. It would be interesting to learn if the author of either was acquainted with the writings of the other or whether their respective conclusions were reached without each having the benefit of an exchange and consideration of each other's views. As to this we have no information. However, while we may not know with certainty just why the loaves were two in number, we may profit from the lessons to be found in both of the interpretations suggested. Certain it is that we need Brother Russell's reminder that in the "little flock," to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom, only overcomers will be found, and if we frequently pause to meditate on this exhortation, it will stimulate and energize us to "gird up the loins of our mind," to "run with patience the race set before us," to give diligence to "make our calling and election sure" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; Luke 12:32; 1 Pet. 1:13; Heb. 12:1; 2 Pet. 1:10).

## **IN CHRIST THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GENTILE**

The other interpretation, too, is not without its valuable lessons, expounding, as it does, the truth so long kept hidden. For this secret of God, which could not have been known apart from revelation, namely that the Gentiles should be partakers of the same promise in Christ, with the Jews -- made "fellow-heirs and of the same Body" -- was not made known in other ages and generations unto the sons of men, as in the New Testament it is revealed unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by the spirit (Eph. 3:5, 6). As a matter of fact, until Christ broke down the middle wall of partition, and consecrated a new and living way for both Jew and Gentile through the veil of his rent flesh, no Gentile, even if he was circumcised, and became a proselyte, and surpassed the most pious in Israel in piety and learning, was ever received on terms of absolute equality, and regarded as altogether one with the congregation of Israel. For two thousand years the knowledge of God and the ordinances, of true religion were confined exclusively to the land of Israel. The nations of the earth, with few exceptions, having rejected the opportunities which had been granted to them, were left to reap the consequences of their own apostasy, and given over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:18-32). God's mercies in the meantime were richly lavished on the Jews; they were the chosen depositories of these mercies - the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, all pertained to them (Amos 3:2; Rom. 9:4).

But with the present dispensation, the "spirit dispensation" as the Gospel Age is rightly called, a new order of things commenced. In Christ, that is to say, in the Christ Company, the anointed company of consecrated believers in Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all are one body. As the Apostle elsewhere declares: "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; . . . and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:14-18).

As the two Pentecostal loaves combined to make up one offering and were waved *as one* in the presence of God, so the believing Jew and the believing Gentile, washed in the same precious blood, sanctified and indwelt by the same spirit which teaches both alike to cry, "Abba, Father," and presented by the one great High Priest, are made equally acceptable, and are consecrated as one offering to the service of God.

Writing on the same truth in connection with the exposition of Rom. 11:15, 16, Brother Russell has himself observed: "Oh, the rich depths of God's wisdom and knowledge! How useless for us to try to discover his dealings except as he is pleased to reveal his plans to us. His doings are all mysteries to us except as we are enlightened by his spirit. Who knew this gracious plan, so much beyond human conception? Who helped the Lord to arrange such a plan, think you? This is not human wisdom. God only could be its author. A Jew would never have planned to graft in Gentiles to share the chief blessings of the promise. A Gentile never would have arranged the original stock and branches Jewish and himself a favored graft. No, the plan is clearly of God ... to him be the glory forever" (*Reprints*, R5533).

## **"THEY SHALL BE BAKED WITH LEAVEN"**

The second peculiarity we wish to notice in connection with the presentation of the loaves at Pentecost is that expressed in the words, "They shall be baked with leaven." This is remarkable, especially in the light of the express injunction given to Israel to exclude leaven from their

sacrifices (Ex. 34:25), but it only supplies us with another instance of the minuteness with which these types are regulated, because of their rich symbolic significance.

Leaven, as we have already observed, signifies sin, or corruption. From every sacrifice, therefore, which set forth the perfect Servant of Jehovah, the true Lamb of God, leaven was rigidly excluded. Thus with the Omer, or Sheaf offered on the 16th of Nisan, which represented Christ Jesus in resurrection, the true firstfruits and meal offering, there was no leaven, for nothing even suggestive of corruption could be associated with the only sinless One, in whom was no guile, or deceit. But it is otherwise with his people. The Church is indeed "elect through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." We are, as consecrated believers, possessed of a new life, are now washed and sanctified and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God, and are "clean every whit" in his sight. Yet well aware are we that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and the more we seek by his grace to follow him wholly, and in the power of his spirit to keep our hearts pure and our hands clean, the more conscious we become of our daily need of cleansing (1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11; John 13:10; 1 John 1:8).

For the same reason also there is no sin offering connected with the Sheaf which prefigured our Lord Jesus (Nisan 16); but with the two loaves there is the express command that apart from the other accompanying offerings there should be one he-goat for a sin offering (Lev. 23:19, 20), which again teaches us that the Church, though called and qualified by the power of the holy spirit to serve, does, nevertheless, need at every moment of its service, the protection of the "precious blood," even of that one sacrifice in which the virtue and efficacy of all the offerings here enumerated, were combined, and under the shelter of which, the Church, presented as the new meal offering in the earth, abides. In the one sacrifice of the Cross, the Savior provided for his Church a fragrance and acceptableness, which it could never find in its own leavened self.

That which is typified by the Feast of Pentecost, looked at from one aspect, is spread over the whole of this Gospel Age, though a striking fulfillment took place at the inauguration of the Christian dispensation fifty days after our Lord's resurrection, when the Pentecostal season for that year "was fully come;" But perhaps that which is specially set forth by the actual presentation and waving of the loaves is yet to be fulfilled at the close of this dispensation, when all the firstfruits from among men being gathered, and the number of the elect being completed, Christ Jesus shall present to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:26, 27); but even then it will be so, not because he found her so, or because of her absolute purity while on earth, but because, having first bought her with his own precious blood, he sanctified and cleansed her with the washing of water by the Word, and made her perfect in the beauty and comeliness which he did put upon her (Eph. 5:26; Isa. 61:3).

### **"THE AFTER-FRUITS"**

There is another feature of this "Feast of Pentecost" too important to escape mention even in so brief a space as remains to us. It is this Just as the Omer presented on the morrow after the Passover; setting forth Christ Jesus as "the firstfruits of them that slept," was a pledge and earnest of the two loaves presented on Pentecost, which prefigured the Church in its elective character as the firstfruits from among men, so also the second firstfruits are themselves a prophecy and pledge of the fuller harvest yet to be gathered in the coming Age, of which in the Scriptures, all God's holy Prophets have spoken since the world began (Acts 3:19). The blessing which came to the world at the first advent of our Redeemer, wonderful though it was, has thus far been only partial in degree and extent.

Indeed, unbelieving men sometimes taunt us with the little that the Gospel has accomplished, and maintain that Christianity has been a failure, and truly if, as is supposed by some, God had purposed the conversion of the world during this Gospel Age, it must be admitted that his plans have thus far been frustrated. For when we contemplate the condition of the world after more than nineteen centuries of Gospel witnessing, what do we see? How far are we from seeing a believing world! Consider how small a proportion of the human race are even professedly believers in Jesus. And of these who mentally assent to the truth as it is in Jesus, how few are governed by it!

But a better acquaintance with our Father's Word reveals the fact that the conversion of the world in the present Age was not expected of the Church. Indeed the very fact that the world has not yet been converted, far from confirming the unbeliever's view that God's plans have failed, is merely a convincing proof to the consecrated child of God that God has not even attempted the world's conversion yet. The Scriptures declare that all God's purposes shall be accomplished, that his Word shall not return unto him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereunto he sends it (Isa. 55:11). And as we look into the Scriptures and then around us at the condition of the world in which we live, we see that the Gospel has accomplished just that which God said it would accomplish in this Age now closing. First, a remnant according to the election of grace was to be saved out of Israel (Isa. 10:22; Rom. 9:27; 11:5). And the Gentiles, we read, God hath visited, to take out of them a people for his name (Acts 15:14). These two, reconciled in one body unto God, through the Cross of Christ, were to unitedly form his Ecclesia, his Church, the Bride or Body of Christ, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. And as the Scriptures foretold, so it is: Israel as a nation still rejects Christ, but have there not been thousands who received him and became sons of God thereby? The other nations of the earth, the Gentiles, still, for the most part sit in darkness, and under the shadow of death, but wherever the Gospel has been preached as a witness, some have heard the call, and have joined the company of *taken out* ones, "called out" ones, as the very word "ecclesia" means.

But an election is never an end in itself; it is rather a means and preparation for some vastly larger accomplishment. And the very fact that the Church is spoken of as a kind of "*first-fruits*" implies "*after-fruits*." The Gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached as a witness unto all nations, for the gathering in of the first ripe ears, to constitute a glorious firstfruits, and then:

"After this I will return,  
And I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen  
And I will build again the ruins thereof,  
And I will set it up;  
That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,  
And all the Gentiles upon whom my Name is called, saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:16-18).

## **REVIEW**

Let us now review the ground covered foregoing. First, we noted that Israel had seven "feasts" or "appointed seasons" or "holy convocations," three of them occurring in the month Nisan, the first month of their ecclesiastical year, the fourth, that of Pentecost, sometimes called the "Feast of Conclusion," came in the third month, and marked the conclusion of the Passover Season. The remaining three feasts did not take place until later, all three occurring in the seventh month.

The four we have considered have received their fulfillment already, in this Gospel Age; Christ our Passover, to whom the paschal lamb had so long pointed, has already been slain for us; the Omer Sheaf, which was both a type and a prophecy, that he should be the first that should rise

from the dead (Acts 26:23), received its glorious fulfillment when on the third day he rose again, and became the firstfruits of them that slept; and with the day of Pentecost there commenced the gathering out of the firstfruits from among men of all nations, who by one spirit are formed into one new body in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, and who, in the power of a new life, are called into fellowship with God, and to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

## **TIME FEATURES**

It is also interesting to observe that insofar as this series of prophetic types has run its course, not only do type and antitype answer to one another in a most striking manner and in a variety of ways which preclude the possibility of their fulfillment being brought about by anything but design, but they also synchronize in point of time. Was it mere chance that when the hour was at last come for the Lamb of God to be offered for the sin of the world that it should have fallen on the Jewish Passover? And when he whom the pains of death could not hold was raised from the grave, victorious over death, to be the beginning of a new, spiritual harvest unto God from among men, was it a mere coincidence that it should have been at the time that the priests and leaders of Israel were busying themselves in preparing and presenting in their Temple the Omer of Firstfruits?

And again, was it mere chance that it was not until the day of Pentecost was fully come (Acts 2:1) that there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind to inaugurate the new dispensation and the spirit of God was poured out in such abundance that about three thousand souls were added to the company of apostles and disciples to form a new meal. offering unto Jehovah, a kind of firstfruits of his creatures? The Christian cannot but perceive in all this not only the prophetic character of Israel's types and ceremonies, and therefore that they could not have been designed by man, but must have originated in the mind of God; the Christian cannot but perceive also, that Christ is all, and that the very election and call of Israel was typical, and that all their divinely ordained ritual and services had Christ and the great redemption which he was to accomplish, for their center and goal.

## **CONCLUSION**

Finally, brethren, let us not conclude our meditation without making a very personal and practical application of the lesson of Pentecost. When the Sheaf of Barley representing our Lord Jesus, was waved before the altar by the officiating priest, it was composed of the very finest ears they could find. So also, at the Feast of Pentecost, fifty days later, the wheat harvest having now been gathered in, the two loaves which were waved before the altar were made of the new flour which, in turn, had come from the very finest of the wheat. That is to say, such should have been the case. But in the case of natural Israel the Prophet Malachi reminds us that instead of coming to the Lord with their best, they were inclined to perform the letter of the law and to avoid its spirit; apparently they were ready to bring sacrifices and offerings, but the selfishness of their hearts and their lack of true appreciation of the Lord led them to proffer him the weak and the lame and the poor, while they kept the better for their own use. Through the Prophet Malachi the Lord urged them that they test him, prove him, and see whether or not he would grant them great blessings if they would but enter into the spirit of their consecration and offer unto the Lord the best of what they possessed.

We, as spiritual Israelites, may gain a profitable lesson from these sharp criticisms of natural Israel. How is it with us? We have vowed unto the Lord the firstfruits, the very best, the very finest, the most valuable of all that we have and all that we are -- of time, influence, talents,

money, all. To what extent are we rendering unto the Lord our offerings and sacrifices in harmony with this our covenant? It will not be long before our trials will be over, but until that little while is past, we are in the trial time, and it is proving us either worthy or unworthy of the glorious favor which we seek -- the chief blessing, joint-heirship with our dear Redeemer. If we really appreciate this favor, we shall seek to what extent there are yet other opportunities of spending and being spent in his service. Of natural Israel the Lord required a tenth -- a tithe. Of spiritual Israelites he makes no specific requirement, but leaves it to us each, that by the degree of our sacrifices, according to our abilities, we may demonstrate the measure of our love.

The Lord's words to natural Israel come to us spiritual Israelites with still greater force: "Prove me now herewith," saith the Lord. If any feel themselves poor, spiritually, if any feel that they are spiritually lean, that they are not enjoying such fellowship with the Lord as they would desire, that they are unable to draw as closely to him as they would like, to all such the Lord says: Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, fulfill your vow of consecration and thus prove me now herewith, and see if I will not do my part; I will do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you have asked or thought. Those who accept the Lord's proposition heartily, without reservations, find their spiritual leanness departing, their joy of heart increasing more and more.

Thus may it be with each one of us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

- P. L. Read

## Rest

*"For we which have believed do enter into rest."*

The rest of faith! How wondrous sweet,  
Each trial and each grief to meet,  
Upheld by that sufficient grace,  
That trusts Him where it cannot trace.

The rest of peace! With mind so stayed,  
That as the sea-birds, unafraid,  
Upon the stormy deep do sleep,  
My soul an inmost calm doth keep.

The rest of love! What holy bliss,  
That He is mine, and I am His!  
It sweetens every bitter cup,  
It bids my tear-dimmed eyes look *up*;

It satisfies my hungry heart,  
And makes this life of Heaven a part.  
Oh! blessed rest of faith and peace,  
Oh! rest of love that ne'er shall cease.

- Gertrude W. Seibert.



# Acceptable Sacrifices

## Part I

*"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." - 1 Pet. 2:5.*

AMONG OUR readers are some who have expressed a desire to see more frequent treatment of what are usually designated doctrinal subjects in our columns, while there are others who would prefer that all our limited space should be devoted to the treatment of the more devotional doctrines, to the exclusion of the strictly "Plan" teachings. The publishing of this series of articles, or any other similar articles, should not be construed as taking sides with either group, but merely as a desire to see that each is given proper consideration. We will hope that each, in the spirit of brotherly love, will rejoice with his brother reader in that he is receiving the thing that seems to himself necessary to his spiritual welfare, thus giving a further exemplification of the beauty of brethren dwelling together in unity.

In view of the fact that the subject of the Sin offering has of late been having the attention of some of the friends, and we trust with profit, it has been thought well to review some of the Scriptures bearing on the matter in a short series of articles. And we are making an earnest appeal to our readers of both viewpoints on this particular subject, that they enter into this study with us, unprejudiced, and in the spirit of prayer and earnest searching of the Word. It is with no spirit of strife that we are examining this subject, and we trust that there will be no tendency through our presentation to "stir up strife among the brethren." We have as our great desire rather, to be peacemakers, remembering our Lord's words 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.' - 1 Cor. 13:8, 9; Matt. 5:9.

### **Distinction Between Teachings of Plain Scriptures and Those of Interpretation**

The series is begun with full realization that it is not our province, or that of any other man, to force any interpretation of Scriptures upon any one. In fact, even the rejection of a plain statement of the Scriptures would give no license to "begin to smite our fellow servants." We would, however, charitably hope that the eyes already opened to see some of the precious truths that sanctify, would later see all those things which we believe are Scriptural, though in the Lord's providence some were for a time hidden from them. It would seem to us, however, a wise proceeding on the part of each one to very conscientiously re-examine any teaching which some other consecrated brethren believe to be based on plain Scriptures, to ascertain whether or not he may have been unconsciously changing, by human interpretation, any word or phrase, thus arriving at a "private interpretation," unwarranted by any Scriptural authority.

In studying the writings of any author, excepting of course the inspired Apostles, a sharp distinction should always be kept in mind between teachings proved by plain Scriptures and those which the writer endeavors to establish through an interpretation of Scriptures. In both instances danger arises because of the imperfection of the mental organism of the student; 'but in the latter instance, entire avoidance of errors, temporarily held at least, cannot reasonably 'be hoped for except as it shall be the due time for God to guide both imperfect instruments into truth. Then, too, all should remember that the time when the path is to be so plain that the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein lies beyond the present dispensation. On the other hand, the picture representative of our time is one of a tabernacle set in the midst of a wilderness and so swathed in coverings as to have had every trace of exterior light excluded, leaving those who

walked there entirely dependent upon the inner light. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, hath shined in **our hearts**, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shined in the face of Jesus." -- (2 Cor. 4:6.) "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." - Zech. 4:6.

### **"Not Sufficient of Ourselves"**

Accepting by faith the statement that "those things that were written before were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come," we come to our Bibles in high anticipation of the things to be learned there on this and kindred subjects, not because we are "wise men after the flesh" (1 Cor. 1:26), but because we have already learned through the history of the Church and by our own blessed experience that throughout the Age "God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit" things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."\* To fail to give time to the study of any subject that gave promise of such revelations as are indicated here, would seem indisputable evidence of unworthiness of acquaintance with Him whom to know is life eternal. Whether or not then our searching shall reveal any of the mysteries hidden beneath the darkening coverings of that tabernacle, if approached in the spirit of true meekness, it will at least give evidence of our love for Him and our desire to more fully know Him.

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\*--See Sermon, "Who may Know God's Secrets," page 5, "Pastor Russell's Sermons".

Let us in humility confess that we are approaching one of the many subjects of which our knowledge is meager, and that we have known many well developed Christian characters who differed with us on this or that point in connection with it. As the Scriptures plainly inform us that there are due times for the revelation of truths to God's people, are we not safe in inferring, or may we not say that we have definite evidence that our Great Teacher's method of dealing with each individual pupil is similar-apportioning each bit of knowledge according to his preparedness to receive it, and according to his present needs of strengthening and assistance?

### **Reasoning Together with Him**

Few subjects demand greater care in our approach, to the intent we may always bear in mind' that we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think [Diaglott: "reason"] anything as of ourselves, but" our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. 3:5.) If He shall teach us "line upon line, precept upon precept," it will be because we are found "casting down reasonings [Diaglott and margin] and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and 'bring into captivity every thought to the obedience Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5.) Let us come then in acceptance of one of the most startling invitations ever uttered: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." (Isa. 1:18.) It is regarding the washing of scarlet sins until they become as white as wool that He would have us reason **with Him**. How it should humble us to a realization of the uselessness of **our** reasonings as we bow in the presence of His perfection. Such humility was necessary that the Apostle might be faithful in the 'performance of his commission, and without it we cannot hope to learn the things he was appointed to teach us. We would listen to him, and learn of his spirit as well as of his teachings. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in Christ." - Eph. 3:8, 9.

## Christ, the Center

If in searching we should arrive at any conclusions that, take out of the hands of our beloved Jesus any feature of that Plan, we may be confident that our efforts to reason together with Him have failed and that we have (we hope unconsciously), injected some thought of our own. Every finding should be "according to a plan of the ages [Diaglott], which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:11.) Note that it does not say that it was purposed in the Logos. We know that the man Christ Jesus was the Logos in His pre-human existence, and that the identity ever remains the same, but the thought we wish to impress, and which we believe the passage is intended to convey is this, that God's wonderful Plan of reconciliation was dependent upon the Logos leaving the glory He had with the Father and becoming the man Christ Jesus. (See Heb. 2:14-16.) Christ means anointed; and He was not anointed in heaven but on earth. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in a form of God, thought not by robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." - Phil. 2:5-8 See Diaglott.

The fact that before the foundation of the world, God had perfected all the details of the Plan of the Ages, every feature of which centered in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the earth, must ever lie beyond the grasp of our feeble intellects. Through this same One, His Holy Arm, God has seen fit to reveal this Plan. The messages of the Prophets testifying of the sufferings and humiliation of the Messiah, even to His ignominious death on the cross, were not believed. Proud of flesh, Israel could not look for such a Savior. No, theirs would be a great, an honorable, a glorious Messiah, a warrior to lead to the pomp of victory. Their pride so blinded them that when He came to His own, His own received Him not. The preaching of faithful Prophets over many centuries had not prepared them for the Messiah that came. Nor is the preaching of the Apostles and other consecrated saints to antitypical Israel rewarded with better success. ;fib, the Arm of the Lord, the true Christ of the Bible, is revealed only to those who are meek and lowly-to those who are teachable as Jesus Himself was. Hear Him: "Follow Me, for I am meek and lowly"-an invitation the proud of heart cannot hear. His way will have no attractions for such; but "the meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way."

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? [It is manifest they could not believe] for He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant [far too tender to find any place in any human scheming], and as a root out of a dry ground." (Isa. 53:1, 2.) What more hopeless picture from the human standpoint could there be than this?-nothing but a shapeless root, no beauty, no sign of life-only death in evidence, and no trace of moisture in the ground to revive any life that might happen to be there. They say, "**He hath no** form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

How apparent it is that it was Jesus' flesh, His humanity,-and all which that implies, that hid from the eyes of the people the Arm of the Lord, the power of His salvation, the means by which Jehovah was reconciling the world to Himself. Because He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief [Leeser: "disease"]" He was "despised and rejected of men . . . as one from whom men hide their face He was despised; and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs [Leeser: "diseases" R. S. V.: sicknesses], and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [Of all the billions of earth, only a little handful have believed His report. All others have turned away their face from Him, and even of that little handful, most have at times shamefully neglected Him but, though it was all foretold before ever He came to die] He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep

have gone astray; we have turned every one to His own way; and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." - Isa. 53:3-6, R. V.

In our studies we will turn to the tabernacle picture for a corroboration of these findings as to the Father's means of concealing the true beauties of the "altogether lovely One" until the due time.

## Half Hour Meditations on Romans

### No. 5

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, . . . to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints. - Rom. 1:1,7*

### Separated Unto the Gospel

IF THERE is one thing more than another in the Apostle Paul's life that calls for our respect and admiration and that provokes us in the only way we should ever allow ourselves to be provoked, namely unto love and good works (Heb 10:24), it is the fact (manifest again and again in the sacred records) that he was in deed and in truth as well as in word *separated* unto the Gospel of God. What that Gospel is, in all the fullness that Paul preached it, we shall see when we come to the study of the Epistle proper. At this time our attention is drawn more especially to the fact that to these Good Tidings of God he was *set apart*.

With him the preaching of the Gospel was not incidental to other matters more important. It was not even one important thing among others that held place in his life. No! it was the business of his life to which all else was incidental and to which all else was held subservient. And in this -- the complete, whole hearted abandonment to the Gospel that from his conversion and call he devoted his life -- his strength lay. If when we see him publicly rebuking Peter for dissembling (Gal. 2:11) we find ourselves asking where he got the strength to speak against one whom he dearly loved, we shall know. We shall remember that to the Gospel of God he has been set apart ; yes, apart from Peter if needs be. And we shall understand how he was able to perform that duty which must have been agony itself to one of so tender a heart.

When we see him on another occasion separating from his close friend over the question of John Mark (Acts 15:37-40) and we are tempted to wonder at his ability to reconcile himself to the absence of one who had proved to be such a son of consolation and comfort as had Barnabas, we shall remember what he now tells us and understand. We shall remember that to the Good Tidings of God his life is devoted. To the Gospel he has been *set apart* . Not for any consideration can he consent to what may in the slightest degree put its progress in jeopardy. "Such is the sole essential work and purpose of his life. He is *separated to the Gospel of God*; isolated from all other ruling aims to this. In some respects he is the least isolated of men; he is in contact all round with human life. Yet he is *separated*. In Christ and for Christ he lives apart from even the worthiest personal ambitions. Richer than ever since he was in Christ (16:7), in all that makes man's nature wealthy, in power to know, to will, to love, he uses all his riches always for this one thing, to make men understand the Gospel of God" (Moule).

## **The Heavenly Calling Comes First**

That we may not lose the practical application of this lesson to our own lives, this writer continues: "Such isolation, be hind a thousand contacts, is the Lords call for his true followers still." And with this we are in hearty agreement. Yet even here it may be well to add a word of caution. As Russell has so wisely observed: "The spirit of a sound mind is to govern the Lords people in all of their affairs, both temporal and spiritual. . . . With many of us, as the Apostle explains, it is the Lords will that we should abide in the vocation in which we were when the message of grace first reached us (1 Cor. 7:20 22). Not all are called to an open, public ministry devoting all of time, talent, effort, and interest to the Gospel message. The majority of the called the Lord evidently intends to instruct as his disciples while they are about their ordinary business, the duties and responsibility of life.

"With these, however, it is necessary that there by a forsaking of boats and fishing tackle, etc., in the heart from the moment that a full consecration is made to the Lord. We cannot serve God and Mammon. We cannot have two objects equally prominent to our attention. The Lord will not have it so with those who are to be his joint heirs in the Kingdom. This class must appreciate the privilege of fellowship in his labor, sufferings, and hopes of glory to such an extent that their hearts will no longer be in the ordinary affairs of life, their ambitions will no longer be for wealth or name or fame from the worlds stand point.

All such ambition and hopes we must forsake if we would be his disciples. He must be first, joint heirship with him must be our ambition; otherwise our hearts would not be in a condition that would be pleasing to the Lord or that would be single for his service; we would be of the kind described as double minded, unstable in all our works and ways (James 1:8).

Undoubtedly this is a difficulty with a large number of those who have named the name of Christ and professed consecration to him and his service.

## **That We Do Not Look Back**

"It is high time that we learn that we cannot serve God and Mammon and that we choose as between these. If we do not choose the Lord and his service and place these first before our hearts affections, we will be counted as placing the others first, the interests of the natural man; and the Lords appreciation of us and the reward he will give us will correspond. He has indeed blessings for all the families of the earth, but the special blessing presented in the exceeding great and precious promises of glory, honor, immortality are for those who love him supremely, more than they love houses or lands, business or wealth, family or kindred or self.

"Our exhortation to all who have forsaken all to follow the Lord is that we do not look back, that we estimate that we have made the grandest bargain imaginable, that we are in the way for obtaining the grandest price imaginable, together with our Lord in his wonderful work and with the Divine approval.

"This seems to be the thought of the Apostle when he urges us to lay aside every weight and entanglement that we may run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author of our faith, until he shall have become its finisher. Let us as promptly as possible, at the beginning of our Christian experience, settle once for all the matter of surrendering our wills to be followers of the Lamb; let us once for all arrange as wisely as possible our temporal affairs and interests in accordance with the reasonable demands of others respecting the same, and let us then faithfully persevere to the end of the race course."

### **Three Great Missionary Journeys**

But to return to the author of our Epistle: In our last Meditation we saw the Lord going before him to Antioch of Syria. He whose interest in his own Gospel of mercy and love never flags or falters had not only prepared with patience and skill a "choice" vessel but had prepared the sphere of influence in which that vessel was to labor "a whole year" (Acts 11:26).

For this purpose the Lord had used some brethren whose names have not been preserved to us. All we know of them is that they were men of Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20). Little did these humble followers of Jesus realize the "increase" which should follow their faithful "planting." Jerusalem had indeed been the cradle of Christianity, but our Lord did not intend that it should also be its grave. And, as the sequel shows, from the testimony which these humble unknown brethren planted in Antioch of Syria, watered as it was by the rich teaching of the Apostle Paul and Barnabas, there arose a new capital of Christianity.

To quote from Godet: "After the martyrdom of Stephen, a number of believers from among the Greek speaking Jews of Jerusalem (the Hellenists), fleeing from the persecution which raged in Palestine, had emigrated to Antioch, the capital of Syria. In their missionary zeal they had overstepped the limit that had been hitherto observed by the preachers of the Gospel and addressed themselves to the Greek population. It was the first time that Christian effort made way for itself among Gentiles properly so called.

Divine grace accompanied the decisive step. A numerous and lively church with a majority of Greek converts associated with Christians of Jewish origin arose in the capital of Syria. In the account given of the founding of this important church by the author of the Acts (Acts 11:20-24), there is a charm, a fascination, a freshness found only in pictures drawn from nature.

"The Apostles and the church of Jerusalem, taken by surprise, sent Barnabas to the spot to examine more closely this unprecedented movement and to give needed direction. Then Barnabas, remembering Paul, whom he had previously introduced to the Apostles at Jerusalem, went in search of him to Tarsus and brought him to this field of action, worthy as it was of such a laborer. Between the church of Antioch and Paul the Apostle there was formed from that hour a close union, the magnificent fruit of which was the evangelization of the world."

### **Never Loses Its Inspiration**

It would be beyond the scope of this series to trace in detail the steps of our Author during the (perhaps 14) years that intervened until he came to pen the immortal chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Perhaps in the Lord's providence it may be our privilege at another time to meet together in these pages for that purpose -- to accompany the Apostle in spirit as he undertakes those three great missionary journeys so marvelously blessed in their results. Familiar as we all must be with the history of this period of the Apostles' life, the story of those eventful years never seems to lose its inspiration in the retelling. If we who today find ourselves living in the closing days of the Gospel Age are sometimes betrayed into a mood of discouragement, we have only to *take time* to re-view the grand "sowing" time to become animated anew with zeal and courage. Just to read the story of those early days is enough to make the heart beat faster. But our present purpose will have been accomplished if we come to the study of the letter to the Romans with a lively sense not alone of undying gratitude to "our beloved Brother Paul" but also of appreciation of the fact that he was one to whom as unto a faithful steward God entrusted the Gospel. Coming thus we shall find ourselves not merely sitting at the feet of a Master in Israel, though that were

enough to elicit our most respectful attention, but we shall find also the spirit of the Lord speaking peace to our souls through Jesus Christ. To Jesus he was faithful unto death and of him in this Epistle he will preach to us in words which notwithstanding all the centuries are yet aflame with all the passionate earnestness of which his heart of loving faithfulness was capable.

### **How Was the Church at Rome Founded?**

Thus far in these Meditations we have sought to picture before our minds the author of Romans. Before examining the Epistle itself it will be proper for us to make inquiry concerning those to whom the letter was addressed. Much has been written by many minds on this question, but it remains true that "The name of the original founder of the Roman church has not been preserved to us by history, nor even celebrated by tradition. This is a remarkable fact when we consider how soon the church of Rome attained great eminence in the Christian world, both from its numbers and from the influence of its metropolitan rank. Had any of the Apostles laid its foundation the fact could scarcely fail to have been recorded" (Conybeare and Howson).

Barnes has summed up his conclusions as follows: "At what time, or by whom, the Gospel was first preached at Rome has been a matter of controversy.

The Roman Catholic Church has maintained that it was founded by Peter and has thence drawn an argument for their high claims and infallibility. On this subject they make a confident appeal to some of the fathers. There is strong evidence to be derived from this Epistle itself and from the Acts that Paul did not regard Peter as having any such primacy and ascendancy in the Roman Church as are claimed for him by the Papists.

"(1) In this whole Epistle there is no mention of Peter at all. It is not suggested that he had been or was then at Rome. If he had been and the church had been founded by him, it is incredible that Paul did not make mention of that fact. This is the more striking, as it was done in other cases where churches had been founded by other men (see 1 Cor. 1:12-15). Especially is Peter, or Cephas, mentioned repeatedly by the Apostle Paul in his other epistles (1 Cor. 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 2:9; 1:18; 2:7, 8, 14). In these places Peter is mentioned in connection with the churches at Corinth and Galatia, yet never there as appealing to his authority but, in regard to the latter, expressly calling it in question. Now, it is incredible that if Peter had been then at Rome and had founded the church there and was regarded as invested with any peculiar authority over it that Paul should never once have even suggested his name.

"(2) It is clear that Peter was not there when Paul wrote this epistle. If he had been, he could not have failed to have sent him a salutation, among the numbers that he saluted in the sixteenth chapter.

"(3) In the Acts of the Apostles there is no mention of Peter's having been at Rome, but the presumption from that history is almost conclusive that he had not been. In Acts 12:3, 4 we have an account of his having been imprisoned by Herod Agrippa near the close of his reign (compare 5:23). This occurred about the third or fourth year of the reign of Claudius, who began to reign A.D. 41. It is altogether improbable that he had been at Rome before this. Claudius had not reigned more than three years, and all the testimony that the fathers give is that Peter came to Rome in his reign.

"(4) Peter was at Jerusalem still in the ninth or tenth year of the reign of Claudius (Acts 16:6, etc.). Nor is there any mention made then of his having been at Rome.

"(5) Paul went to Rome about A. D. 60. There is no mention made then of Peter's being with him or being there. If he had been, it could hardly have failed of being recorded. Especially is this remarkable when Paul's meeting with the brethren is expressly mentioned (Acts 28:14, 15) and when it is recorded that he met the Jews and abode with them and spent no less than two years at Rome. If Peter had been there, such a fact could not fail to have been recorded or alluded to, either in the Acts or the Epistle to the Romans.

"(6) The Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and the Second Epistle to Timothy were written from Rome during the residence of Paul as a prisoner; and the Epistle to the Hebrews probably also while he was still in Italy. In none of these epistles is there any hint that Peter was then or had been at Rome -- a fact that cannot be accounted for if he was regarded as the founder of that Church, and especially if he was then in that city. Yet in those epistles there are the salutations of a number to those churches. In particular Epaphras, Luke the beloved physician (Col. 9:12, 14), and the saints of the household of Caesar are mentioned (Phil. 4:22).

Paul expressly affirms that Luke only was with him in 2 Tim. 4:11, a declaration utterly irreconcilable with the supposition that Peter was then at Rome.

"(7) If Peter was ever at Rome therefore, of which indeed there is no reason to doubt, he must have come there after Paul; at what time is unknown. That he was there cannot be doubted without calling in question the truth of all history.

"When or by whom the Gospel was preached first at Rome it is not easy, perhaps not possible, to determine. In the account of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10), we find among others that there were present strangers of Rome, and it is not improbable that they carried back the knowledge of Jesus Christ and became the founders of the Roman Church. One design and effect of that miracle was doubtless to spread the knowledge of the Savior among all nations. In the list of persons who are mentioned in Romans 16, it is not improbable that some of those early converts are included and that Paul intended to show honor to their early conversion and zeal in the cause of Christianity.

Thus he designated Andronicus and Junia his kinsmen and fellow prisoners (16:7), who were distinguished among the Apostles and had been converted before himself, i. e., before A. D. 34, at least eight years before it was ever pretended that Peter was at Rome. Other persons are mentioned also as distinguished, and it is not improbable that they were as early founders of the Church at Rome (Acts 16:12, 13, etc.)."

### **To All Who in Rome Are God's Beloved Ones**

"Wonderful collocation, wonderful possibility!" writes Moule. "*Beloved ones of God*, as close to the eternal heart as it is possible to be, because in the Beloved; that is one side. *In Rome*, in the capital of universal paganism, material power, iron empire, immeasurable worldliness, flagrant and indescribable sin; that is the other side. I know where thou dwellest, said the glorified Savior to much tried disciples at a later day; even where Satan has his throne (Rev. 11:13). That throne was conspicuously present in the Rome of Nero. Yet faith, hope, and love could breathe there when the Lord called. They could much more than breathe. This whole Epistle shows that a deep and developed faith, a glorious hope, and the might love of a holy life were matters of fact in men and women who every day of the year saw the world as it went by in forum and basilica, in Suburra and Velabrum, in slave chambers and in the halls of pleasure where they had to serve or to meet company. The atmosphere of heaven was carried down into that dark pool by the believing souls who were bidden to live there. They lived the heavenly life in Rome. . . . What a



deadly air for the regenerate soul -- deadly not only in its vice but in its magnificence and in its thought! But nothing is to the Lord Jesus Christ deadly. The souls regeneration means not only new ideas and likings but an eternal Presence, the indwelling of the Life itself. That Life could live at Rome; and therefore *Gods beloved ones in Rome* could live there also, while it was his will they should be there. The argument comes *a fortiori* to ourselves."

Shall we not, both writer and reader, take these words to heart? Would the writer prefer other circumstances in which he feels that he could labor better in the service of the Lord? Does the reader chafe sometimes and fret perhaps at his or her lot? Do we think that in almost any other place than our "Rome" we could do better than we do; elsewhere than where we find ourselves our progress in the Christian way would be assured? Let us remember the lilies, how *they* grow; let us remember about them if we forget all else, they do indeed *grow*; let us allow the argument to come *a fortiori* to ourselves. Let us deter mine that his grace not only can be, nor yet alone that in the days to come it will be, but that *here and now it is sufficient for us*. Thus we shall each in our several spheres of influence prove to be more than conquerors through Christ who strengthens us. Amen.

-- P. L. Read

## TEMPTATIONS PECULIAR TO THE NEW CREATION

*"We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." -- Heb 4:15,16.*

IN HIS discourse, as given in this Epistle, the Apostle Paul has led his readers up to the point of appreciation that although the Lord Jesus was not a priest according to the Jewish arrangement, not being a member of the tribe of Levi, nevertheless He was a Priest according to special Divine appointment. He entered upon His priestly office at the time of His begetting and anointing of the Holy Spirit, which He received at His baptism by John. His work as High Priest still continues and will not be complete until the close of His Reign of a thousand years. He is now a Priest on the highest plane, the Divine plane. Although at His resurrection He became so great, so highly exalted above mankind nevertheless this great High Priest, the highest of all the House of Sons, is One who can be touched with the feeling of our human infirmities. He realizes our imperfection, our trials, our difficulties; for in the days of His flesh He had similar trials, similar difficulties.

The question arises, How could Jesus have had the same kind of difficulties that a mother would have? How could He be tried in all points as a mother? He never was a mother. How could He be tempted as a father? He never was a father. How could He be tempted as a drunkard, or in many ways as fallen humanity are tempted, when He was perfect?

We answer, The Apostle was not referring to the temptations of fallen humanity. He says, "He was tempted in all points like as we are." He was speaking of New Creatures. We know of no temptation that came to our Lord except those which came to Him as a New Creature. He was tempted as we are tempted as New Creatures in Christ. He was not subject to every temptation which assails us from the fallen tastes, appetites and tendencies which come to us as members of the degenerate race of Adam. These are not temptations to the New Creature. Those who have enlisted under the banner of Jehovah should love righteousness and hate iniquity. This was our Lord's mind.

Whoever in his mind loves the wrong and approves the wrong gives evidence of not having the mind of Christ, and would not properly be one of the "we" class referred to here, since his temptations would not be like those which spirit-begotten New Creatures have, like those which Jesus had. Those who have formerly lived in sin should sufficiently know of its undesirability. Those who have practised sin should have had satisfactory evidence of its unholy nature, of its pernicious and destructive effects. So we who have fled from sin and come into God's family do not wish to return to its bondage like a dog to his vomit or a sow to her wallowing in the mire. Those are not our temptations at all. Our temptations are much more subtle.

## **TEMPTATIONS TO SELFISHNESS**

Looking back at our Lord's life after His baptism in Jordan, we see how He was tempted. One of His temptations was in respect to the use of His God-given power. He was very hungry, and was in a place where no food could be secured. The Adversary suggested that He use His miraculous power to produce food for Himself by commanding the stones to become bread. This He could have done; for we remember that on more than one occasion He miraculously created food to feed the multitudes, and at another time He turned water into the choicest wine. But on this occasion He refused to use this power to satisfy His own appetite. The spirit of devotion to the Father led Him into the wilderness for prayer, meditation and study of God's Word, preparatory to beginning his sacrificial service.

We have not the power to turn stones into bread or water into wine. But we have certain privileges and opportunities for instance, the opportunity of speaking in the name of the Lord and of telling of His goodness and of His wonderful Plan for human salvation. All these things are privileges to us who are following in the footsteps of Jesus. In these the temptation is to do these things for our own special advantage. For example we might undertake to proclaim the Truth with the thought of obtaining great honor or a large salary. This temptation frequently comes to those who are God's ministers -- to use this power of God and the Truth of God for personal aggrandizement. To whatever extent any would do these things to that extent he would be falling into temptation.

Another way in which Jesus was tempted was in the suggestion to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, and thus call the attention of all the people to Himself. This act would prove Him to be possessed of superhuman power and would seem to imply that He was under the special protection of God. He could thus make a marvelous demonstration of Himself and He would be considered some great one. The Adversary true to his usual methods, misapplied a Scripture, endeavoring to convince the Master that God had promised to protect Him in just such an instance, to uphold Him lest He should dash His foot against a stone. But Jesus resented this misinterpretation of Scripture, and answered, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He refused to tempt God, to try Him through a misapplication of His promise. The written Word was His refuge and strength in each temptation.

So some of Christ's disciples are tempted to do things in a spirit of foolhardiness, hoping that God will shield them from the evil results of a course which would be contrary to the laws of nature or save them from consequences

which would be the natural result of certain actions. This would be presumption on the part of a child of God. Such a course is saying by implication "God will protect me He will not allow me to come to harm." To presume to do what God has never authorized in His Word, and then expect a miracle to prevent evil from resulting, is entirely wrong and unjustifiable. If we should presume to go out in cold or stormy weather improperly clad, when it is not necessary to do so, and thus

risk contracting illness thereby, we would be doing a wrong and unwarranted thing. Our bodies belong to the Lord and we have no right to do anything unnecessarily which would be a risk of injury or death. Only duty or necessity would excuse such a course.

Another temptation which was presented to our Lord was that He look out over the Kingdoms of the world and then be assured that all these should be given over to His control, without His having to submit to suffering without taking the painful course marked out by God, if He would just fall down and worship Satan, acknowledge his authority instead of that of Jehovah. Satan's words implied that he would not require such suffering and sacrifice as God required; that if Jesus would only cooperate with him, all would work smoothly and prosperously. Our dear Lord replied, "Get thee hence, Satan! for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." So on every point the wily Adversary was foiled. Jesus had as a panoply the Word of God, and was safe from every attack.

So temptations may come to us. We might have suggestions that if we would only not be too straight-laced but would cooperate to some extent with the world and its spirit, we might get along better and have a greater influence over people. This was the Adversary's argument with the Master: "Cooperate with me, and we will bring the whole world where you can give them great blessings." But Jesus would not swerve from the Father's way. Temptations and suggestions of this kind often come to the Lord's people. We fear that many of His professed followers have compromised with the world and the Adversary. The church systems have fallen into this very trap of the Devil. This has surely been a grave and costly mistake. . .

We also have temptations to return evil for evil and railing for railing. Our Lord was so tempted just before His crucifixion. When He was delivered to the chief priests and taken before the Jewish Sanhedrin, He did not show them up, as He might have done. Jesus might have delivered a very scathing criticism of the high priest at that time; He might truthfully have made caustic remarks about the high priest's character. With the power of eloquence which He possessed, He might have made a great stir. Perhaps He felt an impulse in this direction but He held His peace, and allowed Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. And so we have temptations of a similar kind -- temptations to render evil for evil . . .

When we realize that we are not always successful in resisting these temptations, we are to remember that we have a Throne of Grace, to which we may come and find mercy and grace to help in time of need. We may come to our great High Priest. The high priest of old held a very high and honorable position. Our High Priest is far more highly exalted. In considering this, we might at first be inclined to think of Him as very austere, not easily approached. But the Apostle says that we are to remember that this is the One who is our Savior, the One who died for us; and that although He is so greatly exalted and seated upon the Throne of Glory, yet His Throne is also a Throne of Mercy.

Coming to the Savior's Throne is not the same as coming directly to the Father's Throne. Jehovah's Throne is a Throne of Justice but Jesus' Throne is a Throne of Mercy. Here we may obtain mercy if we fail to come up to the highest standard. We are to remember that our merciful High Priest knows just what kind of trials we have. If we have tried to do our best and have been overtaken in a fault, He knows how to make allowance for us and to be very sympathetic. We are to remember that this Mercy Seat is for this very purpose -- to show mercy to us. . .

Therefore we should never grow discouraged, but come to Him again and again, remembering that He is never weary of our coming and that He will not turn us away empty.

- *Reprints*, pages R5965, R5966.

## The Question Box

*"Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." - Matthew 13:30.*

*Question:*

What is the significance of the word "first" in this text?

*Answer:*

The English word "first" correctly translates the Greek word *proton*. Apparently not first in importance, but *first in time* is to be understood.

The sequence of events contemplated is generally held to be:

*First*, gather the tares and bind them in bundles and burn them;

*Second*, gather the wheat into my barn.

Sometimes a variation of this sequence is understood, which may be expressed as follows:

*First*, gather the tares and bind them in bundles, with a view to their subsequent burning;

*Second*, gather the wheat into my barn.

This sequence, however, with or without the variation indicated, is *not found in the text*. This may surprise many, but it is nevertheless the case. That this 'may be the more clearly seen, let us compare with it the language employed in another Scripture in which events *are* stated to occur *in sequence*, namely, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. Here, after saying that "the dead in Christ rise *first*" (same Greek word *proton* as in Matthew 13:30) the Apostle goes on to say: "*then*" (Greek *epeita*, meaning "thereafter") "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up . . ." Here sequence is clearly stated; *first*, *this* is to take place; *thereafter*, *that* will occur.

Returning now to Matthew 13:30, we look in vain for any word meaning "then" or "thereafter" or "afterwards" or "secondly." Instead, what do we find? We find an altogether different word—the word "but" (Greek *de*). *This* word is frequently used, as here, adversatively. It has nothing to do with sequence, but merely indicates, for the wheat, an opposite destiny from that indicated for the tares.

This same adversative use of "but" may be seen in Matthew 3:12, where John the Baptist is discussing the harvest of the Jewish Age. Of Jesus, the Baptist there says: "He will gather his wheat into the garner; *but* he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Here, again, there is no question of sequence; the point being established is that the wheat and the chaff have opposite destinies.

In the parable of the tares, since there is no such word as "afterwards" or "thereafter," the sequence of events must be determined from the context. Here, of course, one must proceed with great caution. Yet I submit that it does no violence to the text, and the householder's words *may* be properly understood, by the following: "*First* gather the tares; *then* bind them in bundles, with a view to their subsequent burning. The wheat, of course, goes to my barn."

As a matter of fact, in regard to the wheat, it would hardly be necessary for the householder to issue *any* instructions. Even an inexperienced farm-hand might be supposed to know what was to be done with *it*. Certainly this must be supposed of competent reapers who had arrived to engage in their accustomed task. The disciples, too, must be presumed to have known the destiny of the wheat. At least, they asked the Master no questions about *it*. What *they* wanted explained, was the meaning of the darnel, which the enemy had sown and which, they were shortly to learn by bitter experience, the enemy in real life *was even then sowing*. So far as the wheat was concerned, they knew that *it* was to be gathered into the householder's barn; there was no question in their minds as to *that*.

Corroborating this thought, (that the idea of sequence-first tares then wheat-is to be excluded from our interpretation) is the use of the word "gather" (Greek *sullego*). This word is used, in Matt. 13:30, not of the wheat\* but of the tares. However, in the parable of the drag-net it is used of the good fish, not of the bad. (Matt. 13:48.) This is noteworthy. It is the *tares* that are *gathered out* in the one parable. Why, then, are not the *bad* fish *gathered* out in the other? To correspond, to teach the identical lesson, and particularly if that lesson had been the lesson of sequence, it would seem that not the good fish but the bad, should have been gathered out. But the parable does not so express the matter. What is the obvious conclusion? Evidently the conclusion must be that no lesson of sequence is intended, for, if there were, the sequence taught in the one parable would be reversed by the other!

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\* The second occurrence of "gather in verse 30 (where it applies to the wheat) comes from a different Greek word.

With the question of sequence, then, excluded, while we may not yet fully understand all the lessons our Lord has for us in these parables, their important, underlying lessons clearly emerge:

I. Good and bad people are to be permitted to become inextricably mixed in the Church throughout the Gospel Age.

II. Their separation, nevertheless, at the end of the Age, is certain to take place.

III. This separation is illustrated by two parables: (1) Tares, (2) Drag-net:

(1) The work of gathering and bundling of the tares (with a view to their subsequent burning) does not precede, neither does it follow, the work of gathering the wheat into the heavenly garner. Both works progress at the same time, that is to say, *during the same period of time*, namely, the harvest of the Gospel Age.

(2) The work of gathering the good fish into vessels, likewise, does not precede, neither does it follow, the work of casting the bad away. Both take place at the same time, that is to say, *during the same period of time*, namely, the closing period of the Gospel Age.

-P. L.. Read.

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## Living Sermons

There isn't a word that a preacher can say  
No matter how lovely or true,  
Nor is there a prayer that his eager lips pray  
That can preach such a sermon as you.

You vowed to serve Christ, and men know that you did;  
They're watching the things that you do;  
There isn't an action of yours that is hid,  
Men are watching and studying you.

You say you're "no preacher"; yes, but you preach  
A wonderful sermon each day;  
The acts of your life are the things that you teach  
It isn't the things that you say.

If Christians were Christians, as they do profess  
Men would notice their glorified mien;  
And say, "What wondrous things they possess  
Who follow the meek Nazarene."

Oh, Christians, remember, you bear His dear name,  
Your lives are for others to view.  
You are living examples; men praise you or blame,  
And measure all Christians by you.

- F. B. Anderson.