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## The Resurrection of the Church

"Changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" - 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.

IN THE 15th chapter of lst Corinthians the Apostle, after first affirming his faith in the resurrection of our Lord, and having established the general principle of a resurrection and its applicability to all mankind (because the redemption accomplished by Jesus was a ransom for all and not for a chosen few), proceeds to discuss the special hope of the Church. In our April issue we reviewed the "Many Infallible Proofs" by which our Lord's resurrection is verified beyond all doubt. Let us now follow the Apostle in his exposition of the hope held out to the Church of sharing in her Lord's resurrection. The Apostle's words, found in verses 42-44, describe, as clearly as it is possible for us to understand things so far beyond our plane of existence, the grandeurs and perfections of being which will be ours when we shall have experienced this great change of the first resurrection. We shall no longer be weak and imperfect, with dying tendencies and animal bodies, but shall be incorruptible, powerful, and have spiritual bodies. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." - 1 John 3:2.

What he now is like, "it doth not yet appear" to our finite minds. However, we know that he is no longer a human being, for as a human being he gave himself a ransom for our race. Indeed, it was for this very purpose that he became a man. (1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 10:4, 5; Heb. 2:9; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.) He is now highly exalted (Phil 2:9; 1 Cor. 15:27), the express image of the Father's person. (Heb. 1: 3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15.) No longer is he to be known "after the flesh," even by those who once knew him so. (2 Cor. 5:16.) Put to death in flesh he was raised in spirit-a life-giving spirit being. (1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 15:45.) And. we, the Church, are to be like him! What a glorious hope is thus set before us! No wonder the Apostle John declares: "Every man that bath *this* hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." - 1 John 3:3.

In the 50th verse (1 Cor. 15:50), where the Apostle declares that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," we are not to suppose, as some have done, that while "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, "flesh and bones" can. We are to recognize that the Apostle, in the use of these words "flesh and blood," signifies human nature, just as our Lord did when he said to Peter on the latter's confession of his belief that Jesus was the Messiah, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." (Matt. 16:17.) Our Lord did not mean to say that his

Messiahship had been revealed to Peter by "flesh and bones." His evident meaning was that this revelation had come to Peter directly from the heavenly Father, without the instrumentality of any human being. So, also, with the Apostle Paul in the passage before us. His declaration, properly understood, is that human nature cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

This is in full accord with his other statements and the statements of the other Apostles that we must become new creatures in Christ Jesus, partakers of the divine nature, if we should be sharers with our Lord in the coming Kingdom, and its great and glorious work. This is in agreement also with our Lord's words to Nicodemus, when he declared: "Except a man be born again [begotten to a new nature and born in the resurrection), he cannot enter the Kingdom of God, and cannot even see it." (John 3:3, 5.) Earthly beings of human nature, "flesh and blood," can see earthly things, but as no *man* hath seen God at any time (John 1:18), likewise no *man* can see the glorified Son of God, and for similar reasons, none will be able to see, with the natural eye, the glorified Church, for all these in their resurrection change will be spirit beings, and like their Lord, the express image of the Father's person. We must keep in mind the fact that the Church is entirely separate and distinct from the remainder of mankind, and that in many particulars their hopes are to be differentiated from those of mankind in general.

#### "WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP"

The Apostle next proceeds to note a difficulty which might arise in the minds of his readers. Those members of the Church who have died will be raised incorruptible, immortal, in the end of the Gospel Age. That much, in view of what he has already said, his readers may be presumed to realize. But how will it be with any who may chance to be still in the flesh at the time of the second presence of the Lord, and the setting up of his Kingdom, and his awakening of his sleeping brethren? Will these living ones pass over into the Kingdom with bodies of flesh and blood?

This mystery the Apostle undertakes to solve. "Behold," says he, "I show you a mystery," or as *Weymouth* translates the passage, "I reveal to you a truth hitherto kept secret: *we shall not all sleep.*" - 1 Cor. 15:51.

Note the expression carefully. He does not say that we shall not all die, but that we shall not all sleep. Death comes in a moment; sleep, on the contrary, occupies a period of time. When, therefore, the Apostle says that we shall not all sleep, he is to be understood as saying that we shall not all remain in the condition of unconsciousness that is styled in the Scriptures "sleep." "But," he goes on to say, "we shall all be changed." It will be as impossible for the human nature, the "flesh and blood," of those living at the close of the Gospel Age, to participate in the spiritual Kingdom which Christ will then establish as it will be impossible for the "flesh and blood," of any of the brethren of the past to do so. How, then, will these get rid of their "flesh and blood," their human nature? We answer: The Scriptures are most explicit on this point. None need err in the matter. *All* who will be partakers with Christ in this, *his* resurrection (the First Resurrection), must be sharers with him in *his* death. As he himself expressed it: "Be thou faithful unto *death*, and I will give thee a crown of life." - Rev. 2:10; 20:5, 6; Phil. 3:10, 11; Rom. 6:5, 8.

The change from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal, from weakness to power, from ignominy to glory, from human nature to divine nature, in the case of these last members, will be so sudden as to occupy no appreciable space of time, and so the Apostle illustrates it by saying that it will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the instant of their dying will be followed the next instant by their change.

Again, the thought of some, that this resurrection change has come to each individual at the moment of dying, all down through the Gospel Age, is contradicted by the Apostle. For, after having said that "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," he goes on to tell us when that is to be. It is to be "at the last trump" -- "when the seventh trump shall sound." Then it is that the dead, that is to say, these special dead, the dead who are under discussion, the dead brethren, the dead in Christ, shall be raised incorruptible. Then it is that we, that is, those of Christ's members who will be living, shall be changed.

The last trump, or the seventh trump, just alluded to, like the previous six trumpets, are all symbolic, as students of the Book of Revelation are aware, and represent seven great periods of time, and their events. It is sufficient here to say that we find ourselves today in the midst of the very events which mark the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The increase of knowledge, the angry nations, taken in connection with time prophecies, establishes this as a fact. Its fulfillment extends through a period of 1,000 years. Its events mark and coincide with all the various features of the Millennial reign of Christ.

After this change of the Church has been completed, after this first, or chief, resurrection has been accomplished, then, the Apostle goes on to tell us, the prophecy written in Isaiah (25:8) will meet fulfillment: "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." - 1 Cor. 15:54.

Here again the Apostle's statement is generally misunderstood. Most readers get the impression that he means the victory over death and the grave is already accomplished. Others, a little nearer to the truth, infer that the victory will be fully accomplished in the change of the Church, the Body of Christ, in the first resurrection. However, neither of these views meets the scope of the statement. On the contrary, the first resurrection, the change of the Church, will be but the beginning of the great victory which Christ is to achieve over death and the grave. This will be merely the bringing forth of the firstfruits, as St. James declares: "A kind of first-fruits of his creatures." The force, then, of the Apostle's statement is seen to be that then, at the first resurrection, this prophecy of Isaiah, of victory over death, will begin to have its fulfillment. It will require all of the Millennium to accomplish victory over death, and Christ and the glorified Church will be the victors, as it is written: "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:25, 26.) To accomplish this complete victory over death and the grave will be the very object of the establishment of the Kingdom, and will require a thousand years, as it is written again, respecting the reign of those who have part in the first resurrection: "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." -Rev. 20:4.

#### **O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING?**

Glancing down the corridors of time, and taking his place *at the close* of the Millennium, seeing the grand culmination, the Apostle takes up the words of another Prophet, Hosea, and exultingly exclaims: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (Hosea 13:14.) His thought here is that death has been stinging our race, blighting it for six thousand years, and sending it ignominiously into the tomb, but that God, who justly condemned us as a race, has looked down upon us in compassion, and beholding our impotence, has provided a Savior, even Jesus, our Redeemer, and that his Kingdom, with which the Church is graciously permitted to be associated, shall destroy, at one and the same time, death and the grave, completely delivering from their power all who will obey the requirements of that Kingdom. While the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, yet, under the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, the sins of the past will be forgiven because of the atonement accomplished; and the perfect law of God, having

been met by the Mediator, will be applied to the ransomed race only in such proportions as they can receive it -- in proportion to their knowledge and ability to obey. Thus the Mediator of the New Covenant will ultimately bring off conquerors all who will obey him.

With such a glorious vista unfolding before his prophetic mind, when men will be actually lifted up out of sin and imperfection-yea out of even death itself, small wonder that his argument ends in a note of praise and gratitude: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." True, it will not be until the close of the Millennium that this vision will be fully realized. But the Apostle does not feel like waiting until then before voicing his song of thanksgiving. Nor will we, if our hearts are in tune with his. While we have not yet actually triumphed over death and the grave, this victory is *reckoned* as ours already, by faith; for by faith the consecrated have "passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.) The word "giveth" is in the present tense and means that he giveth us, the Church, now by faith the victory over death. Our victory over death is a gift of God, won through Christ; and though yet enjoyed only in foretaste, it is sure. With appropriate solemnity the Apostle names the great Victor in full -- our Lord Jesus Christ -- and with this shout of triumphant gratitude, the splendid argument closes.

#### THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

And now what are the practical results which, to St. Paul's mind, should follow in the case of those who are convinced that "his" Gospel is true; who are assured that this life does not end all; but that, in God's plan and purpose, there is held out the hope of endless life?

Knowing St. Paul as we do, we have no doubt at all but that he will draw a sober and practical conclusion; for it is characteristic of him that to whatever height he rises on the rising sequences of his logic, however wide the sweep of his impassioned rhetoric, he invariably comes back with gathered force to the simple duties of the Christian life.

As we would say today, he was always a man who, though his head was in the clouds, kept his feet firm on the ground. And therefore we need feel no surprise at finding him descend from his rapturous song of victory over death and the grave, to so sober a conclusion as an exhortation to faithful and stedfast labor in the Lord.

From *him* we should have expected a sober and practical conclusion, but his conclusion is not quite what even those might have expected who are familiar with his habit of thought. The resurrection of our race as guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ-our victory over death as assured by Christ's victory, has been his leading theme. And when we remember how novel, how strange, his theme was to the people of his time, with what a shock of surprise it struck athwart the hopes and fears in which they had been bred, we might have expected that instead of drawing from it an incentive to stedfast labor in the Lord, he would rather have dwelt on its power to comfort and sustain men in prospect of death. And indeed he does thus conclude the earlier and briefer argument on the resurrection which he had addressed to the Church at Thessalonica. After having taught them how the dead would rise, and the living be changed, when the Lord should return, he adds: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." - 1 Thess. 4:18.

#### FERVENT IN SPIRIT, SERVING THE LORD

The reason for this different conclusion is obviously because the need of his readers was different. The Thessalonians were sorrowing without hope for brethren in Christ who had fallen asleep. They held that only those who were alive and remained to the coming of the Lord would behold and share his glory. *They* needed comfort, therefore, and St. Paul met their need. But the

Corinthians were not mourning hopelessly over them that slept. They were busy with a multitude of speculations on the meaning, the possibility, the manner of the resurrection. They were expending on these doubtful and unprofitable disputations time and energy which should have been given to the activities of the Christian life. *They* needed, when once their doubts had been met, to be recalled from the barren arena of speculation to the fruitful fields of stedfast and patient service. And therefore, instead of saying to them, as to the Thessalonians, "Brethren, be comforted for your dead; Christ will bring them with him," St. Paul meets their need by saying: "Brethren, live out your life; be active, be stedfast, be immovable, abound in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as *ye now* know -- now, after this lengthy presentation of the subject I have given you, even if you knew it not before -- that labor in the Lord is not, and cannot be, in vain." - 1 Cor. 15:58.

This, the more appropriate, is also the loftier lesson of the two, and therefore fitly closes the loftier argument. For to live an active, faithful life is more and better than to have comfort in our death; it is also the way to secure, not comfort *only*, but triumph in our death. What we think or fear our future state will be, when we are dying, will not greatly affect our future, though it may trouble and oppress our heart at the moment; but how we use our life-this will shape our future for us; for our future life, on whatever plane of existence it may be, will be only an extension, along endless and widening lines of the life we now live in the flesh. The more we abound in faithful, joyous, zealous service for the Lord here, the more fit we grow for service on an ampler scale on the other side. The more stedfast and immovable we are in the *work* of the Lord so much the more fully shall we share the *glory* of the Lord-when we enter into the fuller, the more abundant, life; for *his* glory, as we well know, is the glory of service. - John 13:15; Matt. 20:26-28.

"Now bath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep.... Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.... Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

- P. L. Read

## **The Program of Redemption**

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." - Acts 15:14-17.

IT IS remarkable to observe that the first council of the Christian Church ever convened should have outlined the whole scheme of redemption from Pentecost to the consummation of the ages. And whatever we may hold as to the binding authority of later councils, we must accept the deliverances of this at Jerusalem as final, since from the testimony of inspired Scripture we know that the Spirit so truly presided and guided in the assembly that in publishing its decisions it was written, *"It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."* (Acts 15:28.) Jesus Christ is the Architect of the ages. Not only "all things were made by him" -- all worlds and systems of the material universe -- but all the dispensations were planned and predestined by him: "By whom also he made the ages." (Heb. 1:2.) His Church was not set upon her course until a complete program of her mission had been placed in her hands, the working plan by which all her operations were to be directed. *"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world"* (Acts 15:18) is the significant declaration which accompanies the publication of this program. And, instead of being day-laborers working in ignorance, God would have us, as laborers together with him, to understand the entire divine scheme by which our efforts are to be directed, that we *may* be saved from presumption and despair.

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts. 15:14.) Here is the first act of the great program. Because of the citation from the Old Testament which immediately follows-"And to this agree the words of the Prophets, as it is written: After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down"-it has been inferred that this Gentile outgathering and the tabernacle upbuilding mean the same thing; in other words, that the rearing of the tabernacle of David is a figurative expression for the building of the Church of Christ. By this superficial though not altogether unnatural explanation of the passage, the whole program has been reduced to a single act, and the inference drawn that the preaching of the Gospel in this dispensation is to issue in the conversion of "all the Gentiles."

#### A CLEAR PREDICTION OF ISRAEL' RESTORATION

But it is only necessary to observe three things in order to correct this misapprehension: First, that the citation here made from the closing chapter of the Book of Amos is clearly a prediction of the literal restoration of literal Israel, and their reinhabitance of their land; for the words quoted are part of a passage which ends with this decisive language: "And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." (Amos 9:15.) Observe again that in making this citation the Holy Spirit inserts the words, not found in the original text, "After this I will return," and will build again, thus making the restoration of the Davidic tabernacle subsequent to the gathering out of the Church from the Gentiles, and connecting it directly with the personal return of the Lord. And, lastly, we are to notice that in announcing this election from among the Gentiles, it is not added, "in this are fulfilled the words of the Prophets," but "with this harmonize [Greek, symphonize) the words of the Prophets." It is but saying that the parts of the great oratorio of redemption perfectly accord, though centuries lie between its different measures; and then, to show us how they accord, the

Holy Spirit sounds all the octaves thereof with a single sweep, and lets us listen to their grand unison. This, then, is the program of redemption by which we are to work in evangelizing the world:

*"First,* God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the Prophets, as it is written:

*"After this* I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof and I will set it up:

*"In order that* the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things."

The three great stages of redemption are thus outlined in their order.

#### ACT I

The gathering of the Church is the first act, and this, having begun at Pentecost, is still going on. All the descriptions of it contained in Scripture mark it as elective. From the word of Christ to his first disciples, "I have out chosen you *out of* the world," to the triumph-song of the saved heard by the seer in Patmos, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation," the Bride of Christ is always the *Ecclesia*, the called out. Nowhere is universal redemption predicted as the result of preaching the Gospel in this dispensation. If in the minds of those who are accustomed to speak of the world's conversion there is a violent revulsion from this saying, we remind them that we are simply affirming the truth of the doctrine of election, and its application to this entire Age. After eighteen centuries of Christian conquest the vast proportion of the world still "lieth in the Wicked One," and Christ's true Church is but a "little flock" in comparison. Only with pathetic sympathy for our fallen race in its ruin and helplessness can we contemplate this fact. And yet we must be reminded that all attempts to violate this decree by making the Church a multitudinous collection, instead of a gracious election, have only issued in apostasy. Sacramentarianism would take the world into the Church by instituting a baptized paganism instead of taking the Church out of the world by preaching spiritual regeneration; and behold the result in a half heathenized Christendom. Latitudinarianism would make the Church coextensive with the world by preaching the gospel of universal salvation-all men by nature the sons of God-and thus, by crowding the Lord's house with "the children of the Wicked One," turn it into "the synagogue of Satan." Though it be in mystery, and sorrow and tears, we had best work on, therefore, by the divine schedule, preaching the Gospel among all nations for a witness that we may gather out for Christ a chosen and sanctified people, calmly answering those who say that God's ways are partial, with his own words: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

And yet, lest we should take too narrow a view of this theme, other considerations should not be overlooked. Christ is called "The Light of the World." The beams of sunlight both elect and irradiate; taking out here and there from muddy pool or acrid dead sea a pure, crystalline drop and lifting :it heavenward; but also lighting and warming all the atmosphere by their radiance. So Christ, preached among the Gentiles, elects from them a holy flock, a regenerate Church; but besides this, he changes the moral climate of the world so that such noxious growths as cannibalism, slavery, polygamy, and infanticide disappear. These two results inevitably attend the proclamation of the Gospel; regeneration saving some out of the world, and civilization putting something of Christianity into the world: but by neither process as now going on is the Millennium destined to be ushered in.

#### ACT II

Moreover, let us reflect that *an election is never an end in itself;* it is rather a means and preparation for some vastly larger accomplishment. The body of the elect is really Christ's army, gathered by a divine conscription from every kindred and people, that they may attend him as he goes forth to his final conquest of the world. "And they that are with him are called and elect and faithful." (Rev. 17:14.) Of this, however, we shall speak later.

The second act of the divine program now comes into view. "After this I will return and build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down." By Christ's personal coming in glory, the conversion and restoration of Israel are to be accomplished. The reader has only to compare this order with the redemption schedule drawn out in the eleventh of Romans to see how perfectly they agree. St. Paul, indeed, begins with the Jewish election, as St. James does with the Gentile election. And we must remember that the choosing out that is going on in this dispensation touches both: "not out of the Jews only, but also out of the Gentiles." (Rom. 9:24.) But each Apostle takes up the same succession of events; first the Gentile outgathering, and then the Hebrew regathering. The hardening of the Jews which we now behold is declared by Paul to continue "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved. As it is written: There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom. 11:25, 26.) By the "fulness of the Gentiles" we understand the predestined number, the elect company gathered through the entire period of this dispensation to form the Bride of Christ. When this number shall have been accomplished, then the conversion of Israel will occur and their national restoration to God's favor. The two parts of the aged Simeon's prophecy are strictly consecutive: "A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel." (Luke 2:31, 32.) He will be the supreme glory of his people Israel, when he shall at last be owned as their Messiah and reign in the midst of them as King.

#### ACT III

These two stages of redemption-the Gentile election and the Hebrew restoration -- are to be accomplished "in order" to a third, namely, "that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called."

Without enlarging upon the thought, what a profound hint of this does Paul give in Rom. 11:12, 15 where, speaking concerning his rejected people, he says: "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, *how much more their fulness."* "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, *what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?"* 

"It is clear," says Lange, "that the Apostle awaits a boundless effect of blessing on the world from the future conversion of Israel." Then shall the word of Joel concerning the effusion of the spirit have a complete fulfillment, as it had a partial and prefigurative accomplishment on the day of Pentecost. For if we turn to the Prophet, we find it said: "And ye shall know that *I am in the midst of Israel,* and that I am the Lord your God and none else. *And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh."* (Joel 2:27, 28.) And with this agree the words of Isaiah where he predicts the desolation of Zion as continuing *"till the spirit be poured upon us from on high."* (Isa. 32:15.) When the Lord shall shed forth the holy spirit abundantly upon his covenant people, through them will come unspeakable blessings to the Gentiles. The modern post millennial interpretation completely deranges the program of prophecy at this point by making redemption terminate with its first scene. "The end of the Age," brought in by the second coming

of Christ, misleadingly translated "the end of the world" in our common version, is supposed by many to close the probation of the race, winding up the present earthly scene, and bringing in the final judgment and the eternal state, instead of opening into the triumphs of the age to come. Is it possible that the first Christians could have had this idea? If so, how could they have so ardently desired, and earnestly looked for, the speedy return of the Lord, since his coming would end the work of Gentile ingathering, while as yet only a handful had been saved? On the contrary, take the words of Peter to the Jewish rejectors of Christ, and observe how clearly they teach the very opposite: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who bath been appointed for you, even Jesus; whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things." (Acts 3:19-21, A.R.V.) Here we have, as constantly throughout the Scripture, the repentance of Israel directly connected with the return of Christ from heaven, and their conversion and the Lord's appearing resulting, not in their cutting off from the presence of the Lord, but in times of "refreshing from the presence of the Lord"; not in the winding up of all things, but in the *"restoration of all things."* Three acts of the divine program appear again in this declaration of Peter -- the coming of Christ, the conversion of Israel, and world-wide redemptioncorresponding exactly with those revealed in the texts from James and Paul already considered.

#### CONCLUSION

It is thus seen that the redemption of the world comes at last, following (1) the glorification of the Church at our Lord's return, and (2) the conversion and restoration of Israel. If it be said that this is a Jewish conception, borrowed from the Old Testament, we will answer: "Yes, and reiterated and more explicitly unfolded in the New Testament." For nowhere is the order of events so distinctly revealed as in the Acts and Epistles.

"Election, partial and opposed to world-wide redemption," has been the verdict of thousands who have replied against God, knowing little of the range of his eternal plan. "Election, gracious, and preparatory to world-wide redemption," is the discovery which a deep pondering of Holy Scripture reveals. The elect Church transfigured with her risen Savior, and the chosen nation, Israel, restored and made glorious on earth-these are his appointed agents, trained by long discipline and trial for bringing all peoples and tribes into obedience to God. As to the Gentile election, so to the Hebrew restoration, objectors may be reconciled when it appears that this, too, is instrumental and preparatory to world-wide salvation. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," is the summons which the long captive daughter of Zion shall hear, and then the blessed result: "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." - Isa. 60:3.

Condensed from *Ecce Venit (Behold He Cometh) A. J. Gordon,* Boston, Mass., 1889.

## Half Hour Meditations on Romans No. 31

#### Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. -- Psa. 85:10

IN our previous Meditations we have seen that the grand theme with which our Epistle is concerned is that age old question: "How can man be just with God" (Job 9:2:25:4). St. Paul well knows, indeed all men intuitively realize, that there can be no such thing as final acceptance with God apart from *personal righteousness*. During the first half of his life the Apostle had zealously sought to *attain* righteous ness by "works of law," but in the mercy of God he was brought to realize the impossibility of this; and "his" Gospel has to do with another method of securing righteousness. This other method he declares to have originated with God and to be available to all mankind on the one condition of faith. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel," he has told us, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . . for therein is being revealed to believers a righteousness from God which has its origin in faith" (Rom. 1:16,17; Free Translation).

Reading rapidly through the Epistle at one sitting to get its broad outlines clearly in mind (see Meditations No. 10) we saw that the manner in which we *obtain* this gift from God (we never could *attain* it) is by its being first imputed and then imparted to us. We saw too (Meditations No. 17) that while it was imputed to us instantaneously on our exercise of faith in God, its impartation is a *gradual process*. Something of the same thought may be seen in the words of Psa. 103:3. Not in its application to fleshly Israel, of course, but to the Gospel Church: "Who *forgiveth* [instantaneously] all thine iniquities; who *healeth* [gradually] all thy diseases."

When, therefore, we are told by the Apostle that "now, apart from law, a righteousness of [or from] God hath been manifested" (Rom. 3:21), such "righteousness of God" should not be limited in our understanding of it to imputed righteousness only; but within its meaning the thought of imparted righteousness should also be embraced. These *two parts of the one gift* may be spoken of as together constituting our righteousness from God -- our *justification*; imputed righteousness being referred to as *justification by faith*; and imparted righteousness being referred to as *sanctification*. While it would not appear to be of greatest importance what terms we use to describe these favors, provided we possess the substance of the matter in our life's experience, yet it will conduce to clearness of thought in our own minds, and perhaps avoid the possibility of confusing the minds of others, if we distinguish between imputed and imparted righteousness and, whenever possible, do so by the use of those terms adopted by the Apostle himself.

His Gospel theme, then, is *justification:* righteous ness, both imputed and imparted. But so far as we have yet gone in our study of the Roman letter, he has limited his discussion of this theme to imputed righteousness only -- to *justification by faith*. In his development of this part of his theme he first stressed the worlds need of it, not by reference to Adam and the condemnation we inherit from him but by an appeal to the facts of history -- to the record of the personal, individual sins of men. Showing first the plight of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:18 32) and of the Jews (Rom. 2:1-29). After anticipating and answering objections (Rom. 3:1-8), he summed up his conclusion by declaring that all the world is guilty before God and that by means of works of law no human being shall be declared righteous in Gods sight (Rom. 3:9-20). Then, having in this long interval [Rom. 1:18 Rom. 3:20] satisfactorily demonstrated the worlds need, he proceeded to show Gods provision to meet that need in the bestowal of righteousness to man as a gift (Rom. 3:21 24). In the verses we are now to consider he will explain how it was possible, on the one condition of faith, for this free

and universal gift of righteousness to be given by God to men. It was made possible, he will tells us, by the atonement sacrifice of Christ.

#### **Brief Summary of Divine Wisdom**

Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. -- Rom. 3:25,26

These two verses in conjunction with the four which precede are among the most important in the Bible and have been called the very "marrow of theology."

"Almost all expositors seem to have realized with more or less depth of conviction, and with feelings varying according to their illumination and the ratio of their evangelical sympathy with the Apostle, that they had to do here with words of peculiar significance, and with ideas which, in the Apostles own judgment, were of transcendent moment. Luther draws attention in the margin of his Bible to the importance of this section. He says, over against Rom. 3:23 and following verses This is the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible. And yet it is so short that the statement seems scarcely to have begun when all is said, within so few lines are the most decisive thoughts concentrated. It is really as Vitringa has said, the brief summary of Divine wisdom. "

#### **Established Beforehand**

The word translated "set forth" has been viewed by expositors from various standpoints and has received different explanations. Scholars tell us that it may signify either of two meanings: (1) " *To exhibit,* pre sent *publicly* (in view of oneself), or (2) *to set before oneself* in the innermost shrine of the spirit; to decide, to design *beforehand* within oneself." It will be noted that the text of the *Authorized Version* adopts the first of these two meanings and that in the margin the alternative meaning of "foreordained" is given. Both meanings are in full accord with the teaching of St.

Paul both elsewhere and in our Epistle. For the first meaning we may compare Gal. 3:1: "O, thoughtless Galatians! who fascinated you, before whose very eyes Jesus Christ was openly *set forth* as a crucified one?" *[Rotherham]*.

The second sense is however the prevailing one in the New Testament; for example Rom. 1:13: "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I *purposed* to come unto you"; and Eph 1:9: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath *purposed* in him self." While the first meaning is not impossible, the context, in our opinion, speaks strongly in favor of the second meaning. "The fundamental idea of the passage is the contrast between the time of Gods forbearance in regard to sin and the decisive moment when at once he carried out the universal expiation. It is natural in this order of ideas to emphasize the fact that God had foreseen this final moment and had provided himself beforehand with the victim by means of which the expiation was to be accomplished." If this be the true thought, then the translation, "Christ Jesus, whom God had foreordained [or whom God hath established beforehand]," would already give a hint of the contrast with the phrase "at the present time," which appears in Rom. 3:26. More over such an expression, placed as it is at the head of the whole passage, "brings out forcibly the incomparable gravity of the work about to be described."

#### The At-one-ment

The Greek word translated "propitiation" is *hilasterion*. To explain it many commentators have had recourse to the technical meaning it has in the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament, where it denotes the *Mercy Seat*, the *Propitiatory* or *lid of the Ark of the Covenant*.

This meaning is urged in the *Emphatic Diaglott* in a footnote to this passage and is stressed by Brother Russell in *Scripture Studies*, Vol. V, page E442. Sup porting this viewpoint is the fact that in the only other place in the New Testament where the word occurs, namely, Heb 9:5, it has this sense. There are other commentators, however, of equal scholar ship and devotion, who prefer translating it in the passage before us as a *propitiatory sacrifice*, or the means of propitiation. Thus, one such, referring to the Mercy Seat, above which the Shekinah shone and on which the blood of atonement was sprinkled, writes: "Here is indeed a manifest and noble type of Christ. But on the other hand *the word* " hilasterion" gets that meaning only indirectly. Its native meaning is rather a price of expiation. And a somewhat sudden insertion here of the imagery of the Mercy Seat seems unlikely, in the absence of all other allusion to the High Priestly function of our Lord."

It has also been observed that if the matter in question were a well known definite object, the only one of its kind, such as the Mercy Seat, the word "the" could not be omitted, whereas it does not appear in the Greek text. It has been further observed that if the words "set forth" previously discussed be understood in the sense of "exhibiting publicly" there is a contradiction between this idea of publicity and the part assigned to the Mercy Seat in the typical Atonement Day arrangements: this object *remained concealed*, the High Priest alone could see it, and he only through a cloud of smoke. And if the verb be understood in the sense of "established beforehand," it is still more difficult to apply the idea of an eternal purpose, either to a material object such as the Mercy Seat itself or to its typical connection with our Lord Jesus.

In regard to the *sense* of the passage, the difference is not at all material, nor does it so far as we can see in the slightest degree affect the Apostles reasoning.

In either case there is reference to a significant type.

The proper idea of "propitiation" is to render propitious or to render favorable. Thus in Luke 18:13 the publican says to God, "Be merciful, *show thyself propitious* to me." Whether we think of our Lord Jesus as the Mercy Seat (1; the Propitiatory) or as the propitiatory sacrifice (2; the *means of propitiation*), we should beware of entertaining the thought that he produced any change in Jehovah's *character;* as if Jehovah required to be supplied with a *motive* to pity, an *inducement* to be merciful, a *price* for love and grace. "Far be such a thought from our minds! We ought to conceive of Jehovah as eternally, immutably, infinitely compassionate and merciful. That any transition is produced in His nature [disposition] by the mediation of Christ from previous vindictive cruelty to benevolence and compassion, . . . is a supposition full of blasphemous impiety. God has been from eternity and to eternity must continue the same; without variableness or shadow of turning. Being absolutely perfect, he cannot change to the better; for perfection cannot be improved; the slightest alteration, therefore, of what he is would detract from that infinite excellence, without which he would not be God.

But while God is infinitely and immutably good, he is at the same time infinitely and immutably holy and just and true. Never ought we to speak of him as acting at one time according to mercy and at another according to justice; if by this mode of expression it be meant that the claims either of justice or of mercy are in any part of his procedure, in the smallest possible degree, suspended or left out of view. He never acts in opposition to the one or to the other, but always agreeably to both. The character of God is *perfect excellence*; infinite goodness: -- not a hemisphere of separate stars, but one glorious sun of pure and holy light. The attributes which constitute this character, though we may speak of them and reason about them, distinctly are completely inseparable in their exercise."

#### **Through Faith -- In His Blood**

Some, indeed most, commentators connect the phrase "in his blood" with the word "faith" thus: "through faith in his blood." While this may be grammatically possible, yet we believe those expositors correctly interpret the mind of the Apostle who separate these clauses and understand them as each qualifying the *hilasterion*, the Mercy Seat, or the means of propitiation. The *American Revised Version* seeks to indicate this sense by placing a comma after the word faith, while it is still more clearly indicated in the phraseology of the *Emphatic Diaglott*, which reads: "Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a Mercy Seat, by his own Blood, through the faith." The Apostle has told us that God established Jesus beforehand as the means of propitiation; he here explains *how that means operates*. Two conditions are required to make the means effective: one on the part of the Savior and one on the part of the sinner.

Propitiation does not take place except *through faith* on the part of the saved and except *through the shedding of his blood* on the part of the Savior.

Moreover these two conditions were not afterthoughts on the part of Jehovah but were decided on when he "set forth" or "established beforehand" Jesus as the means of propitiation or as the Mercy Seat. When in his eternal counsels he determined within himself that Jesus should be the means of propitiation, he also stipulated with himself that this should not be apart from these two conditions. -- *P. L. Read* 

### **The Song of Songs** A short series of devotional meditations - No. 2

"My beloved is mine and I am His." - Song of Solomon 2:16.

WITH verse 8 of chapter 2 (Song of Solomon 2:8), the Bride begins to reminisce over the days of courtship, recalling how her lover came wooing her.\*

She sees her beloved coming to her, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills like a young hart. His voice is sweetest music, his eagerness to reach her expressed in the vigor with which he approaches. There is no obstacle in his path. He shows himself at her lattice, speaking those words of immortal beauty:

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away. For, lo, the winter is past, The rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; The time of the singing of the birds is come And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree ripeneth her green figs, And the vines are in blossom; They give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, And come away." (Song of Solomon 2:8-13.)

It needs no strong imagination to picture the ardent lover, having come with haste and eagerness, full of vigor and beauty, standing outside the lattice, seeing the face of his espoused through its dividing bars, and calling her softly but urgently to come: "Come away from your long winter imprisonment into the loveliness of the restored, awakened earth."

Then, as though his yearning heart can no longer bear delay and separation, he cries in the language of all true love:

"O my dove, who art hidden in the clefts and recesses of the rock, let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice, for thy voice is sweet and thy face is fair." - Song of Solomon 2:14.

Rotherham, in his *Emphasized Old Testament*, also greatly assists the student to identify the speakers. He does so by indicating when one ceases and another begins.

C. A. Coates, following J. N. Darby's translation, is in close agreement with the two scholars above mentioned.

<sup>\*</sup> Scholars are in general agreement, with only minor differences, as to the appropriate divisions of this "Song of Songs." R. G. Moulton, in the *Modern Reader's Bible*, summarizes the "Suite of Seven Idyls" as follows:

<sup>1. 1:1 -2:7 -</sup>The Wedding Day

<sup>2. 2:8 -3:5 -</sup>The Bride's Reminiscences of the Courtship

<sup>3. 3:6 -5:1 -</sup>The Day of Betrothal

<sup>4. 5:2 -6:3 -</sup>The Bride's Troubled Dream

<sup>5. 6:4 -7:10-</sup>The King's Meditation on His Bride

<sup>6. 7:11-8:4 -</sup>The Bride's Longing for her Home on Lebanon

<sup>7. 8:5 -8:14-</sup>The Renewal of Love in the Vineyard of Lebanon

And she, confident, assured of unfailing love and devotion, declares that "My beloved is mine and I am his." "Turn, my beloved," she calls to him. "Do not leave me until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Come and go as a young hart upon these mountains of separation." - Song of Solomon 2:16.

#### **APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH**

It is not difficult to apply this idyllic scene to the experiences of the true Church of Christ, more especially as the work of testing and selection draws to an end and the new Age is at the door of human affairs.

The whole creation groans and travails together in pain, waiting, although they may not know it, for the manifestation, or full revealing, of the sons of God, through whom alone are to come the promised great blessings of life, of health, and of peace. (Rom. 8:19-22.) During the entire Gospel Age, these children of God have also groaned, while subjected to the weaknesses of the flesh. (Rom. 8:23.) While espoused by consecration vows to Christ, the flesh and natural conditions have proved to be mountains of separation between lover and loved. He, in his exalted glory as a life-giving spirit being, like unto God the Eternal Father, and sitting upon the throne of the universe at the right hand of Omnipotence, has been able to see his beloved only through the lattice of the flesh. Her beauty has been veiled, hidden in the rocks; as a dove, weaponless and defenseless, she has needed and had Almighty protection and care. The great Rock of Ages has been her dwelling, but while absent, her kingly Bridegroom has been in a very real sense, by the power of his Holy Spirit, constantly near. In spirit he has never been absent from the side of those dear to him. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the Age" has been no empty pledge but a proved fidelity. (Matt. 28:20.) A living Savior has found no obstacle of time or place too great for his mighty powers to overcome. The loving, faithful heart has found him ever present, always attentive, always encouraging, inspiring, and comforting at every turn in life. At life's end, the faithful have been made aware of the tender but imperative call: "Arise thee, my beloved, my fair one, and come away." The work is finished; the course is run. It is a last look through the lattice before the break of day for each one when the tabernacle of the flesh must be dissolved in death, and the thought, the vision, the Name of Jesus, may be the last to register upon the consciousness of a dying saint. However, there is another sense in which the Bridegroom comes to his Bride not only in spirit, but in person, when the Age is ended and the Church, the collective Bride, is ready for the consummation so long awaited by God and all his realm; when the marriage of the Lamb has come and his Bride has made herself ready, when the Father's kingly Son is ready to assume his royal responsibilities; to take the government of earth upon his shoulder; to reign King of kings and Lord of lords until all enemies are beneath his feet.

#### **RESTORED ISRAEL SYMBOLIZED**

The fig tree putting forth her green figs may well be considered a symbolic reference to the restored nation of Israel, and the tender grapes of the vine to a revival of faith and a renewal of relationship between God and man. The singing birds, the flowering earth, betoken the springing of righteousness to new beauty in a fairer natural realm. The winter of human despair, of discontent, sin, and rebellion, is over. The rains are passed; the cleansing work of storm and tempest, the frustration of death and sterility are gone. The fruitfulness, beauty, and delight of a rested, restored, reinvigorated kingdom lie ahead, and the kingly Bridegroom invites his espoused bride to "arise," to stir herself, to come away with him, to behold the beauty of his Kingdom and share with him its glorious privileges.

#### THE DAY OF BETROTHAL

In verse 6 of chapter 3 (Song of Solomon 6:3), the Bridegroom is seen coming in state.

"Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness Like pillars of smoke, Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, With all powders of the merchant? "Behold, it is the litter of Solomon."

This "litter," "couch," or "bed," of Solomon's is quite different from the bed on which the maiden has been dreaming, in Song of Solomon 3:1. It is a palanquin for Solomon's use, *while on active service*, guarded by threescore warriors, experts trained to serve as his body-guard against hostilities arising at night. (See Song of Solomon 3:7.) Interestingly enough, C. A. Coates remarks here that "the fact that his couch is guarded 'because of alarm in the nights' shows that the present time is in view, and not Millennial conditions. It is in the presence of foes, and in the time of espousals; the marriage has not come yet."

Having arrived, Solomon, in the first verse of chapter 4 (Song of Solomon 4:1), commences to pour out his heart's affections on the Shulammite.

Under the symbolic expression of an enclosed garden, he proposes marriage and, in the same symbol, is accepted.

"Behold, thou art fair, my love; Behold, thou art fair ....

"Thou art all fair, my love; And there is no spot in thee." - Song of Solomon 4:1-7.

After further exchanges of tender compliments and melting endearments, the bridegroom again invites his bride: "Come with me from Lebanon, look from the top of Amana." (Song of Solomon 4:8.) Amana is a part of the Libanus mountain range, and the invitation is figurative. The invitation is to view the panorama of his Kingdom from the safe security of his arms, to lean upon him, to rest in his love while he shows her things to come, makes known to her the glories of his realm, tells her its past history, and prepares her, not only for the joys of companionship at his side, but for the high dignity she will share with him as his co-partner, co-heir of an eternal Kingdom.

Throughout the Gospel Age the disciples of the Lord, like the beloved Apostle John, have found their moments of rest, joy, and inspiration while leaning upon the arm of love. Sitting with Christ in heavenly places, breathing a finer atmosphere than that of natural philosophies, they have been instructed and taught concerning the mighty and eternal purpose of God. They have been encouraged to look out upon its length and breadth, its height and depth, and made to realize how exalted and glorious is the position to which the Church of Christ has been called. By the operation of the spirit of God upon their consecrated, renewed minds, they have been convinced that as individual members of the Church, they have sacred union with their glorified Head, a union which, if maintained unbroken unto death, will receive the fulfillment of every divine promise- a change from human form and nature to that of the highest form of celestial life -- a position of royal priesthood, not for an age but for eternity.

#### THE SHULAMMITE'S RESPONSE

The sight, the understanding, the conviction, fill the Bride with wonder, with love, and with determination, at all costs, to gain this high exaltation, to share with her kingly Lover, the glory, honor and immortality which are his. Whatever experience will fit her for such honor and affection, whether it be likened to the bleak north wind of adversity or the warm south wind of prosperity, she will welcome it. Hear her in Song of Solomon 4:16:

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; Blow upon my garden, That the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, And eat his pleasant fruits."

- F. A. Shuttleworth, Scot.

## **Millennial Kingdom Prospects**

JUST as Scripture distinguishes between the saved and the lost, and between different classes of the one and of the other, so it also distinguishes between the future portion of the Church of Christ, that of the Jewish people, and that of the nations of the earth. Too many in their thoughts of the future leave out this last; the destiny of the Church of this dispensation figures so largely in their anticipations, that they seem almost to forget that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the *world*," and to lose sight of the blessed prospect that, not only is the present Church to be saved out of the ruined world, to become the Eve of the second Adam, but that the ruined earth itself is yet to be renewed, and to become the happy home of saved nations, who participate in the results of redemption.

The narrowness which sees nothing but the salvation of the Church of this dispensation is born of human selfishness, and not of Divine love; it is founded not on the teaching of Scripture, but on tradition and prejudice. The Bible in this [the Book of Revelation], its last revelation on the subject, plainly teaches that while the peculiar glories of the Church are hers, and hers alone, that while the special privileges of the natural seed of Abraham belong to Israel, and to Israel only, that there is yet a blessed future awaiting mankind also under the gracious government of Immanuel.; that one of the effects of the completed work of Christ will be to place the saved nations of the eternal Kingdom in a restored paradise, completely delivered from the tempter, and so established in righteousness that the Holy One can take up his abode among them for ever. "He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The salvation of the Church of this dispensation is not the whole result of the death of Christ. There is to be in addition the establishment for ever of a kingdom of God, in which his will shall be as fully done by men on earth as it is now done by angels in heaven. The consummation, for which we daily pray, is destined to come at last; and holy and happy service, without a flaw and without an interruption, is yet to be rendered to God, not merely by the glorified saints of the new Jerusalem, but by redeemed nations on the earth, who walk for ever in the light of the celestial city.

Such is the sublime vista of the future of our race, and of our earth in the eternal ages, with which Scripture closes.

#### - H. Grattan Guinness, Light for the Last Days, pp. 617-619.

It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act, There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay-not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete. - Rev. 21:4.

And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was "made to be inhabited" by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them, as represented in the Edenic paradise, in which the representative man was at first placed. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briers, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but "the earth shall [easily and naturally] yield her increase." "The desert shall blossom as the rose"; the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing and obedient servants; nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in him. The restless desire for something new, that now prevails, is not a natural but an abnormal condition, due to our imperfection, and to our present unsatisfactory surroundings. It is not Godlike restlessly to crave something new. Most things are old to God; and he rejoices most in those things which are old and perfect. So will it be with man when restored to the image of God. The perfect man will not know or appreciate fully, and hence will not prefer, the glory of spiritual being, because of a different nature, just as fishes and birds, for the same reason, prefer and enjoy each their own nature and element most. Man will be so absorbed and enraptured with the glory that surrounds him on the human plane that he will have no aspiration to, nor preference for, another nature or other conditions than those possessed. A glance at the present experience of the Church will illustrate this. "How hardly," with what difficulty, shall those who are rich in this world's goods enter into the Kingdom of God. The few good things possessed, even under the present reign of evil and death, so captivate the human nature that we need special help from God to keep our eye and purpose fixed on the spiritual promises.

That the Christian Church, the Body of Christ, is an exception to God's general plan for mankind, is evident from the statement that its selection was determined in the divine plan before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4, 5), at which time God not only foresaw the fall of the race into sin, but also predetermined the justification, the sanctification and the glorification of this class, which, during the Gospel Age, he has been calling out of the world to be conformed to the image of his Son, to be partakers of the divine nature and to be fellowheirs with Christ Jesus of the Millennial Kingdom for the establishment of universal righteousness and peace. - Rom. 8:28-31.

This shows that the election or choice of the Church was a predetermined thing on God's part; but mark, it is not an unconditional election of the *individual members* of the Church. Before the foundation of the world God determined that such a company should be selected for such a purpose within a specific time-the Gospel Age. While we cannot doubt that God could have foreseen the action of each individual member of the Church, and could have foreknown just who would be worthy and therefore constitute members of that "little flock," yet this is not the way in which God's Word presents the doctrine of election. It was not the thought of an individual predestination which the Apostles sought to inculcate, but that *a class* was predetermined in God's purpose to fill the honorable position, the selection of which would be upon conditions of severe trials of faith and obedience and the sacrifice of earthly privileges, etc., even unto death. Thus by an individual trial, and by individually " overcoming," the individual members of the predetermined class are being chosen or accepted into all the blessings and benefits predetermined of God for this class.

- Charles T. Russell The Divine Plan of the Ages, pp. 191-194.

## **Our Burden Bearer**

The little sharp vexations, And the briers that catch and fret, Why not take all to the Helper, Who hath never failed us yet? Tell Him about the heartache, And tell Him the longings, too; Tell Him the baffled purpose, When we scarce know what to do. Then, leaving all our weakness With the One divinely strong, Forget that we bore the burden, And carry away the song.

- Poems of Dawn

## The Question Box Hebrews 4:9-11.

THE Scripture to which our question refers reads as follows:

Hebrews 4:9 - "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

Hebrews 4:10 - "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Hebrews 4:11 - "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

#### Question:

Who are "the people of God"? What is the "rest" that "remaineth" for them (Hebrews 4:9) ? And when do they "enter into that rest" (Hebrews 4:11) ? In your reply please include a discussion of Hebrews 4:10. What connection, if any, does it have with verse 9?

#### Answer:

The "people of God" are the overcomers of this Gospel Age. The "rest" that "remaineth" for them, is that complete satisfaction of heart and mind which awaits them when they enter the joys of their Lord on the other side the veil. By faith and consecration, however, this rest is entered by them here and now, in this present life. Verse 10, although apparently offering no logical support to Hebrews 4:9, is vitally connected therewith, as we will endeavor to show in a later paragraph.

#### **TWO ASPECTS OF REST**

Rest: may be understood in two senses: (1) rest *from* work and (2) rest *in* work. With us both forms of rest are experienced. In various ways, with brain or hand or both, we work. When the labor has been especially hard, we become rested and refreshed by ceasing from it. We are enabled to return to it, whatever it is, and to do it better, because we left it for a season. This is rest *from* work, a most true and refreshing rest.

But is mere cessation from toil our best and most welcome refreshment, our truest rest? By no means! To see our work well done; to search into it and find no flaw; to feel that it comes up to that conception, that ideal, of it, which we had framed in our *mind -- this*, when we get it (which is not often, we fear) gives us a far more perfect and restful satisfaction than mere sitting or lying still. This is rest *in* our work as distinguished from rest *from* our work; and the one is immeasurably higher than the other.

#### **GOD's REST**

Thus, only very much more so, must it have been, always, with the Eternal God. Thus must it have been with him in the period we call "creation." Day by *day, this* consummate Artist, this master Musician, this peerless Poet, may be seen at work (in the first two chapters of Genesis). The work proceeds happily. Day by day God sees that the work of the day is good. "And God saw that it was good," is the familiar refrain appended to the story of each day's toil. At last the six

days come to an end, and with them the work. And now God surveys all that his hands have made the heaven and the earth, land and sea, day and night; sun, moon and stars; fish, birds, beasts; man and woman. As he surveys them he rejoices in his finished work, and pronounces them not "good" only, but "very good." They answer to his thought. They are *his* thought, in varied and beautiful forms. He takes delight in them and blesses them. *This* is *his picture;* and it is a finished and triumphant work of art. This is his *music;* and it is perfect harmony, perfectly rendered. This is his *poem;* and it is without flaw. He rests *in* it and is refreshed.

It is true, of course, as the Scriptures record, that (the works of creation being finished, Gen. 2:1, 2; Heb. 4:3, 4) God rested *from* them; but it is also true that his is a rest (a sense of refreshment, Exod. 31:17) *in* them. Indeed, the idea of rest, in his case, as mere relief from weariness, is repugnant to us, as it is to the whole tenor of Scripture. "Halt thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" - Isa. 40:28.

Moreover, the term "rest" as applied to God, not only could not imply relief from weariness, but also could contain no suggestion of inaction. Indeed, no less an authority than our Lord Jesus himself, affirmed: "My Father worketh *hitherto"-that* is to say, up to that very hour in which Jesus made the statement. (John 5:17.) Having ceased *from* the works of creation, and while resting *in* them, God proceeded to work on a higher plane. Rising from the works of creation, he commenced the work of sustaining and providentially administering them. And rising yet higher, he proceeded to the work of redemption, including his "New Creation." And who can doubt but that *these* works of providence and redemption (which he is accomplishing during his day of rest from his works of creation-a day which, so far as we have been able to ascertain from the Scriptures, *will never end*) who can doubt but that *these* works do but heighten and intensify his "rest."\*

#### **GOD'S REST OFFERED TO MANKIND**

Rest *from* work may be considered as the negative, and rest *in* work the positive form of God's rest. In God's rest man was destined to share. But he failed to attain it at the creation, for after that, all too soon, came the fall.

When God began dealing with the typical people, Israel, his offer of rest was first presented in the negative form. Even God himself condescended *thus* to rest, although, as we have seen, this was far from realizing his idea of rest, either for himself or for man. *It was, however, the only idea of rest which Israel could grasp.* The Pharisees, at the time of our Lord's first advent, do not appear to have understood in any degree the significance of his words when he insisted that his sabbath-keeping should be like that of his Father, who "worketh until now"; that the sabbath *he* regarded, was one in which *works* (good works, of course) were appropriate -- a Sabbath made *for* man, not one for which man had been made. The Jewish sabbath, therefore, was God's offer of rest in its most elementary (its negative) form, of rest from work.

<sup>\*</sup> Foregoing we have ascribed the works of (1) creation, (2) providence, and (3) redemption, to God. However, there is a school of thought which ascribes only the works of creation and providence to the Father, that of redemption being ascribed to the Son. The truth is that all three are works of God (the Father, the Great Jehovah). In all three, however, his Only-begotten Son has been and will continue to be his honored Agent. - John 1: 1-3; Col. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 8:6.

#### **CANAAN REST TYPICAL**

The offer of rest in Canaan went beyond this negative aspect. While falling short of the perfect rest which remained for "us" (the Gospel Age Church), it was nevertheless a development in that direction. Israel, however, that is to say, all those who came out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, so provoked God by their disobedience-their lack of faith and lack of fidelity-that he would not permit them even to enter the Land of Promise, much less would he allow them to enter *his rest*. (Heb. 3:1-19.) Joshua *did* take their *children* into Canaan, but even they did not realize the true rest there, for (as our Author points out in 4:8, where the word "Jesus" should be "Joshua") if Joshua *had* given them rest, there would have been no occasion for God, by his holy spirit, to have extended the invitation once again, as he does in Psalm 95: *"Today,* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." The fact that this gracious invitation was once again made *then,* "after so long a time" (Heb. 4:7), (that is to say, after so long a time as the interval between the entrance into Canaan and the date of Psalm 95) shows that the promised rest had not yet become their portion.

In view of all this failure on the part of mankind in general and of Israel in particular, to obtain the rest promised, what shall we conclude? Obviously -- so reasons *unbelief -- we* must conclude that the promised rest will never be possessed; it is nothing but a beautiful mirage!

This, however, is not the conclusion of our Author. Instead, he exclaims: "Not so! I happen to be acquainted with God. He is my Father. Perhaps the most wonderful thing about him is that he has a craving to share this rest of his with his intelligent creatures. Moreover his desire is so intense that, though the invitation to share his rest remains without response for centuries, the effect is merely to extend the horizon; meantime renewing the invitation. My Father craves intelligent fellowship *and will not be denied*. The King's house must be filled with guests. Surely you will recall our Master's own parable. (Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24.) Since they to whom the good tidings (of entering into his rest) were first preached, entered not in because of unbelief, it remaineth that some (that is, some others) must enter therein." (Heb. 4:6.) *Our Author's inference,* from Psalm 95:11, thus seen, *is based on the gracious character of God*.

#### **GOD'S REST REALIZED BY CHRIST**

At this point we turn to Heb. 4:13 for guidance in properly understanding verse 10. In the Authorized Version, Heb. 4:13 reads:

"But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Rotherham, Moule, and others, however, have pointed out a preferred translation, which reads:

"But all things are naked and exposed to his eyes:-As to whom is our discourse." (Italic ours.)

Ah, yes! Christ is his theme from beginning to end of his epistle. If in our attempt to follow his involved discussions, we find ourselves, at times, in danger of forgetting the main theme, our Author will not long permit us to do so. Christ is the theme of his discourse, and if we do but remember this as we ponder Heb. 4:10, the reflection cannot fail to prove helpful in reaching the proper understanding of that verse.

In the *Authorized Version*, Heb. 4:10 reads:

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also bath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

This verse is one of peculiar difficulty. It is not surprising that scholars differ in their expositions of it. These expositions fall into two groups, which, freely translated, are:

(1) "Whosoever has entered into God's rest, has ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

(2) "He, Christ, entered into God's rest, having himself ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

In support of the second view a number of reasons have been advanced, which may be summarized as follows:

(a) The definite phrase, "he who entered"; (not as R.V. "he that is entered").

(b) The emphatic pronoun, "himself."

(c) The historic tense "entered up on rest"; (not as R.V. "hath rested").

(d) The implied contrast with Joshua (Josh. 4:8).

(e) That otherwise there is no mention of Jesus' experience or achievements between Heb. 2:1, and Heb. 4:13.

(f) That otherwise read, the verse offers no logical support to Heb. 4:9, but interpreted thus supplies the ground on which the sabbath-rest is offered to Christ's followers.

While at first sight this second view may be surprising, it gains in beauty, the more it is considered. God's rest which is set before us, our Forerunner (our Joshua) has already entered. He who once said, "I must work while it is called Today" (John 9:4), on entering into God's rest, ceased from his own works, as God did from his. He said, "It is finished." (John 5:36; John 17:4; John 19:30.) Joshua gave Israel no deep and satisfying rest; but Jesus (our Joshua) Son of God, has entered into rest on our behalf, and by him, we too, may enter. He it is, whom Heb. 4:10 represents, with a marked and isolating emphasis, as having "himself entered into rest." Thus understood, the verse does not stand alone and unconnected, but prepares the reader to return, after having seen the supremacy of Jesus over Moses and Joshua, to the consideration of his representative character, his high priesthood, already mentioned at the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3.

In our consideration of verse 10 foregoing, we have endeavored to distinguish the two main viewpoints of scholars, and we confess that if we had to choose between them, we should take the second. But why not combine them? Since the rest that Jesus realized was not for himself alone, but for all who share his fellowship; since he could and did offer the rest of salvation to all who came to him ("Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"-Matt. 11:28); and even the deeper rest of consecration to those who would take his yoke and learn of him (Matt. 11:29, 30); -- since these things are so, may we not understand from Hebrews 4:10

that *Christ first, and we after him,* are to cease from our own works as God did from his? It would surely seem so.

#### THE REST OF FAITH

At the outset we said that by faith and consecration, God's rest is entered by us here and now, in this present life. This thought has been beautifully expressed by the poet in the following lines:

"Canst thou not see That there remains another rest for thee?

"There is a rest which still he waits to give A rest wherein we all may daily live --The rest whereby, As in his death, by faith, we die, So he will live in us, And living thus Will change our death to life -- a life no longer ours, But his, renewed with resurrection powers.

"O now receive The calm, deep peace which comes as we believe That all the works, and zeal, and strife,

With which we sometimes sought to fill our life, Are vain and dead, at best: Thus shalt thou understand, and enter into rest."

In the Manna for May 18 we have a choice paragraph bearing directly on the passage. We quote it here as a fitting close to the foregoing discussion.

"Our rest in the Lord is as complete as is our belief in him. He who believes fully *rests* fully; he who believes only partially *rests* but partially. The ideal condition of the spiritual Israelite is the attainment of a perfect rest, a perfect Sabbath-keeping, in his present experience, and a waiting and laboring for another and still more complete rest -- the actual rest of the perfected condition -- the rest that remains for the people of God."

- P. L. Read

# **Notice of Annual Meeting**

As announced in our March issue, the Annual Meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc., is scheduled to be held on Saturday, June 7, at 2:00 p.m., in the parlors of the Institute, 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, New York.

While only members of the Institute may vote (in person or by proxy), all those who love our Lord Jesus and his appearing are welcome to attend.

The Agenda will include a report by the Chairman, reviewing the activities

of the Institute for the preceding period. Following his report, the election of Directors for the coming year will take place. Opportunity will also be given for the consideration of such other matters as may properly come before the meeting.

The seven brethren now serving as directors are candidates for reelection. Brothers M. R. Rutkowski (Chicago, Ill.) and Edward Zielinski (Agawam, Mass.) have also been nominated.

# **The Attitude of Prayer**

# *Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto* God. - Phil. 4:6.

Not only should we pray frequently and with regularity, but we should be always in the attitude of prayer. The children of God should be in that attitude of heart which looks to the Lord for divine guidance in every perplexity and every experience. Just as the needle turns to the pole, so our hearts should turn to the Lord. If there is pain or trouble or difficulty in our pathway, we should look to Him. If there is privilege of serving the Lord, we should not think ourselves competent for the service without turning to the Lord for help. In other words, the Christian's prayer should ascend not only in the beginning of the day; the atmosphere of prayer should surround him continually. It should not be a mere sense of duty, but an appreciation of a great privilege.

- Charles T. Russell, Reprints R5203-4.

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If you do not wish for His Kingdom, don't pray for it. But if you do, you must do more than pray for it; you must work for *it. - John Ruskin* 

## A Day to Remember

Under this caption, the March issue of the *Berean News* tells of the special cause for rejoicing which the Cicero friends had on the first Sunday in March.

"This date will live long in the hearts and minds of the brethren of the Berean Church. Thirteen of our brothers and sisters demonstrated their desire to take on the yoke of Christ, by the meaningful ritual of baptism. In the latter part of January, one of our brothers expressed his desire to be baptized. Our first thought was to wait until our May convention, but the Spirit prevailed upon us not to put the matter off, but to plan for the service at once. March 2 was chosen, because a local Baptist Church kindly extended to us the use of their baptismal pool. Brother William Urban, in his morning sermon, "Man of Sorrows," lifted our spiritual vision to the life and death of our Lord, thus setting a fitting background for the baptismal sermon. The service was opened with the hymn, "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken." Sister Helen Gapa followed with the inspiring solo, "When God Speaks," which was also the subject of the baptismal sermon. As Brother Andrew Jarmola began his sermon, there were four candidates; before he finished there were seven. The baptism took place in the Oak Park Avenue Baptist Church. As these seven were being baptized by Brothers Matt Rutkowski and William Urban, six more came forward to confess their consecration, and to join with others in symbolizing same."

Our readers, we know, will rejoice with the Cicero friends in their heart cheering experience, glad to have this fresh evidence of the power of the simple Gospel message when it takes hold of sincere hearts. We especially congratulate the thirteen who symbolized on the occasion, rejoicing with them in the great privilege not only of "believing on the name of Jesus, but also of suffering for his sake." We trust for them, as for ourselves, an "abundant entrance" in the Lord's own good time and way.

## **Recently Deceased**

Bro. S. T. Carlyle, San Bernardino, Cal. - (Mar.)
Sr. Lida Conklin, Hamilton, Ill. - (Mar.)
Bro. B. H. Dove, Seattle, Wash. - (Oct.)
Sr. M. Hayes, Christchurch, N. Z. - (Mar.)
Sr. Elizabeth K. Hill, Philadelphia, Pa. - (Mar.)
Bro. F. G. Mote, Des Moines, Ia. - (Mar. '57)
Bro. C. H. Tamplin, Dayton, Ohio - (Mar.)
Bro. John B. Westcott, Seattle, Wash. - (Mar.)