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What Say the Scriptures About Our Lord's Return?

"And He shall send Jesus Christ, which (who) before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must retain until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." - Acts 3:20, 21.

FOR centuries past, a considerable number of professed Christian people, in reading the Scriptures on the Second Coming of Christ, have failed to find there, the comfort intended for the truth -- hungry. Instead of seeing in our Lord's return the dawn of hope for the groaning creation - - the restitution of all the willing and obedient to Paradise -- they have seemed to read only a dreadful doom for the masses of humanity, and the destruction of all things mundane. According to this conception, the Plan of God is seen to end in disaster and defeat so far as the vast majority of our race is concerned, and in an overwhelming victory for Satan.

Consequently many of God's people have been offended, "stumbled," as respects the doctrine of the Second Coming of our dear Redeemer, by reason of peculiar, extravagant, unreasonable, illogical, and unscriptural views on the subject, presented by some, who professedly love the Lord's appearing. The doctrine of our Lord's return, as a glorious gem, should be given the first place among the precious jewels of Divine truth, where it can cast its halo and splendor and brilliancy over all connected and related promises and blessings. It should not be left in the imperfect setting which hides its glory and beauty, but should be recovered, remounted, set in its true place, to the glory of God and the blessing of all who are sincerely and truly his people.

We need offer no apology for the interest which we feel in this grand subject, which is the center upon which all the testimony of Divine grace through all the holy prophets, is focused. Rather do they need to apologize who, knowing that the Second Coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead hold the most important places in the Scriptures, next to the doctrine of the atonement for sin, have, nevertheless, neglected these while they have quarreled, skirmished, fought and bled over trifling things of no real importance, doctrinally or otherwise.

St. John, the beloved, in his wonderful revelation was given a glimpse of future events, and in marvelous vision was borne across this dispensation with the powers of evil still in control; he

saw its changing scenes of Church and State and witnessed the final culmination. He saw a great change take place on earth -- Satan was bound, the forces of evil overthrown; Christ and the saints reigning in glorious triumph. He saw the world of mankind liberated from the prison -- house of death, and their return to their home in Eden -- Paradise restored. No wonder the beloved John, as he beheld this heavenly vision of the future blessing of the world, out of the depths of his soul, cried, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

As one of the Twelve who walked with Jesus while upon the earth, St. John remembered the prayer that the Savior taught his followers: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as in heaven." The Apostle knew there could be no more sure guarantee of the lifting of the curse from the earth, and the restoration of humanity, than this promise of the Kingdom at the Second Coming of the Lord.

Thank God, with the clearer light of our day shining upon the pages of his holy revelation, the sincere student reads in fairer lines the Plan of God with regard to our Lord's return and the consummation of all things in the ultimate and everlasting defeat of Satan and in the recovery of a sorrowing and ruined world. - Rev. 21:3-5; 22:3, 17.

We presume that it is admitted and believed by all familiar with the Scriptures, that our Lord intended his disciples to understand that for some purpose, in some manner, and at some time, he would come again. True, Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the Age" (Matt. 28:20), and by his Spirit and by his Word he has been with the Church continually, guiding, directing, comforting, and sustaining his saints, and cheering them in the midst of all their afflictions. But though the Church has been blessedly conscious of the Lord's knowledge of all her ways and of his constant care and love, yet she longs for his promised personal return; for when he said, "If I go, I will come again" (John 14:3), he certainly referred to a second personal coming.

Some think he referred to the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; others, to the destruction of Jerusalem, etc.; but these apparently overlook the fact that in the last book of the Bible, written some sixty years after Pentecost, and twenty -- six years after Jerusalem's destruction, he that was dead and is alive -- the risen Christ -- in living tones speaks of the event as yet future, saying, "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me," and the inspired John replies, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." - Rev. 22:12, 20.

Quite a number think the conversion of a sinner forms a part of the coming of Christ, and that so he will continue coming until all 'the world is converted. Then, say they, he will have fully come.

These evidently forget the Scriptures on the subject, which declare the reverse of their expectation: (1) that at the time of our Lord's Second Coming the world will be far from converted to God; (2) that "in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:1-4); (3) that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." - Ver. 13.

They forget the Master's special warning to his Little Flock -- "Take heed to yourselves lest that day come upon *you* unawares, for as *a snare* shall it come on all them [not taking heed] that dwell on the face of the whole earth." (Luke 21:34, 35.) Again, "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him," when they see him coming (Rev. 1:7) -- no reference is made to the conversion of sinners. Do all men wail because of the conversion of sinners? On the contrary, if this passage refers, as almost all admit, to Christ's presence on earth, it teaches that all on earth will not love his appearing, as they certainly would do if all were converted.

CHRIST'S REIGN TO ACCOMPLISH WORLD'S CONVERSION

Some expect an actual coming and presence of the Lord, but set the time of the event a long way off. It is their thought that when the world has been converted by their efforts, and Satan bound, and the knowledge of the Lord caused to fill the whole earth, and when the nations learn war no more, then the work of the Church in her present condition will be ended; and that when she has accomplished this great and difficult task, the Lord will come to wind up earthly affairs, reward believers and condemn sinners.

Some Scriptures, taken disconnectedly, seem to favor this view; but God's Word and Plan viewed as a whole, will be found to favor the view that Christ comes before the conversion of the world, and reigns for the purpose of converting the world; that the Church is now being tried, and that the reward promised the overcomers is that after being glorified they shall share with the Lord in that reign, which is God's appointed means of blessing the world and causing the knowledge of the Lord to come to every creature. Such are the Lord's special promises: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." (Rev. 3:21.) "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." - Rev. 20:4.

ONLY THE CHURCH CALLED IN THIS AGE

There are two texts chiefly relied upon by those who claim the Lord will not come until after the Millennium to which we would here call attention. One is, "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24:14.) They claim this has reference to the conversion of the world before the end of the Gospel Age. But "witnessing" to the world does not imply the conversion of the world. The text says nothing about how the testimony will be received. This witness has already been given. In 1861 the reports of the Bible Societies showed that the Gospel had been published in every language of the earth, though not all earth's millions had received it. No, not one -- half of the sixteen hundred millions* living have ever heard the name of Jesus. Yet the condition of the text is fulfilled -- the Gospel has been preached in all the world for a "witness" -- to every nation.

* The population of the world is given as sixteen hundred millions. This was true in 1878, when this article was written. Today it is 23/4 billion and "by 1962 the total population of the world is expected to pass the 3 billion mark." - *Newsweek*

The Apostle (Acts 15:14) tells that the main object of the Gospel in the present Age "is to take out a people" for Christ's name -- the overcoming Church which, at his Second Advent, will be united to him and receive his name. The witnessing to the world during this Age is a secondary object.

The other text is, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psa. 110:1.) The vague, indefinite idea regarding this text seems to be that Christ sits on a material throne somewhere in the heavens until the work of subduing all things is accomplished for him through the Church, and that then he comes to reign. This is a misconception. The throne of God referred to is not a material one, but refers to his supreme authority and rulership; and the Lord Jesus has been exalted to a share in that rulership.

St. Paul declares, "God hath highly exalted him [Jesus] and given him a name above every name," "authority" above every other, next to the Father. If Christ sits upon a material throne until his enemies are made his footstool (all subdued), then, of course, he cannot come until all things

are subdued. But if "right hand" in this text refers, not to a fixed bench or locality, but, as we claim, to power, authority, rulership, it follows that the text under consideration would in nowise conflict with the other Scripture which teaches that he comes to "subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21), by virtue of the power vested in him.

JESUS' FIRST ADVENT TO REDEEM MEN -- HIS SECOND ADVENT TO RESTORE THE REDEEMED

A further examination of God's revealed Plan shows a broader view of the object of both the First and Second Advents; and we should remember that both events stand related as parts of one Plan. The specific work of the First Advent was to redeem men; and that of the Second is to restore and bless, and liberate the redeemed. Having given his life a ransom for all, our Savior ascended to present that sacrifice to the Father, thus making reconciliation for man's iniquity. He carries and permits "the prince of this world" to continue the rule of evil, until after the selection of "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife" who, to be accounted worthy of such honor, must overcome the influences of the present evil world. Then the work of giving to the world of mankind the great blessings secured to them by his sacrifice will be due to commence, and he will come forth to bless all the families of the earth.

The Apostle informs us that Jesus has been absent from earth -- in the heaven -- during all the intervening time from his ascension to the beginning of the Times of Restitution, or the Millennial Age -- "Whom the heaven must retain until the times of restitution of all things," etc. (Acts 3:21.) Since the Scriptures thus teach that the object of our Lord's Second Advent is the restitution of all things, and that at the time of his appearing the nations are so far from being converted as to be angry (Rev. 11:18) and in opposition, it must be admitted either that the Church will fail to accomplish her mission, and that the Plan of God will be thus far frustrated, or else, as we claim and have shown, that the conversion of the world in the present Age was not expected of the Church, but that her mission has been to preach the Gospel in all the world for a "witness," and to prepare herself, under Divine direction, for her great future work. God has not yet by any means exhausted his power for the world's conversion. Nay, more -- he has not yet even attempted the world's conversion.

This may seem a strange statement to some, but let such reflect that if God has attempted such -- a -- work -- he has signally failed; for, as we have seen, only a small fraction of earth's billions have ever intelligently heard of the "only name" whereby they must be saved. We have stated the views and teachings of only some of the leading sects -- Baptists, Presbyterians, and others -- viz., that God is electing or selecting out of the world a "little flock," a Church. They believe that God will do no more than choose this Church, while we find the Scriptures teaching a further step in the Divine Plan -- RESTITUTION for the world, to be accomplished through the elect Church, when completed and glorified. The "little flock," the overcomers, of this Gospel Age, are only the Body of the "Seed" in *or by* whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

THE ELECTION AND FREE GRACE OF THE BIBLE

Those who claim that for six thousand years Jehovah has been trying to convert the world, and failing all the time, must find it difficult to reconcile such views with the Bible assurance that all God's purposes shall be accomplished, and that his Word shall not return unto him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereto it was sent. (Isa. 55:11.) The world has not been converted nor the knowledge of the Lord filled the earth; therefore the Word has not yet been "sent" on that mission.

Two lines of thought have divided Christians for centuries, namely, Election and Free Grace. That both of these apparently opposite doctrines have Scriptural support, no Bible student will deny. This fact should lead us at once to surmise that in some way both must be true; but in no way can they be reconciled except by observing heaven's law -- order, and "rightly dividing the

Word of Truth" on the subject. This order, as represented in the Plan of the Ages, if observed, will clearly show us that while an Election has been in progress during the present and past Ages, what is by way of distinction designated Free Grace, is God's gracious provision for the world in general during the Millennial Age. If the distinctive features of the Epochs and Dispensations indicated in the Bible be kept in mind, and all the passages relating to Election and Free Grace be examined and located, it will be found that all which treat of Election apply to the present and past Ages, while those which teach Free Grace are fully applicable to the next Age only.

However, Election as taught in the Bible, is not the arbitrary coercion, or fatalism, usually believed and taught by its advocates, but a selection according to fitness and adaptability to the end God has in view, during the period appointed for that purpose.

The doctrine of Free Grace, advocated by our Methodist friends, is also a much grander display of God's abounding favor than its most earnest advocates have ever taught. God's grace or favor in Christ is ever free, in the sense of being unmerited; but since the fall of man into sin, to the present time, certain of God's favors have been restricted to certain individuals, nations and classes, while in the next Age all the world, including the dead who will then be awakened, will be invited to share the favors then offered, on the conditions then made known to all, and whosoever will may come and drink at life's fountain freely. - Rev. 22:17.

BOTH THE LIVING AND THE DEAD SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF MESSIAH'S REIGN

Some who can see something of the blessings due at the Second Advent, and who appreciate in some measure the fact that the Lord comes to bestow the grand blessing purchased by his death, fail to see the vast scope of that blessing as applicable to all mankind, and that all those in their graves have as much interest in the glorious reign of Messiah as those living at the time of his return. Is it not because of God's Plan for their release that those in the tomb are called "prisoners of hope"?

We read that Jesus Christ by the grace of God, tasted death "for every man." (Heb. 2:9.) But if he tasted death for all humanity, both the living and the dead, and from any cause that sacrifice becomes efficacious to only a small fraction of earth's billions, was not the redemption comparatively a failure? And in that case, is not the Apostle's statement too broad? When again we read, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE" (Luke 2: 10) , and, looking about us, see that it is only to a "little flock" that it has been good tidings, and not to all people, we would be compelled to wonder whether the angels had not overstated the goodness and breadth of their message, and overrated the importance of the work to be accomplished by the Messiah whom they announced. Again, "There is one God, and, one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." (1 Tim. 2:5, 6.) A ransom for all? Then why should not all for whom the ransom has been provided have some benefit from Christ's death? Why should not *all* come to a knowledge of the truth, that they may believe?

A RANSOM TO BE TESTIFIED "IN DUE TIME"

Without the *key* how dark, how inconsistent these statements appear; but when we find the key to God's Plan, these texts all declare with one voice, "God is Love." This key is found in the latter part of the text "a ransom for all, To BE TESTIFIED IN DUE TIME." God has a due time for everything. He could have testified it to these in their past lifetime; but since he did not, except to a small minority, it proves that their due time must be future. For those who will be of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and share the Kingdom honors, the present is the "due time" to hear; and whosoever now has an ear to hear, let him hear and heed, and he will be blessed accordingly. Though Jesus secured our ransom before we were born, it was not our "due time" to hear of it for long years afterward, and only the appreciation of it brought responsibility; and this, only to the extent of our ability and appreciation. The same principle applies to all: in God's due time it will be testified to all, and all will then have opportunity to believe and be blessed by it.

The prevailing opinion is that death ends all probation, but no Scripture so teaches; and all the above, and many more Scriptures, would be meaningless, or worse, if death ends all hope for the ignorant masses of the world. The one Scripture quoted to prove this generally entertained view is, "Where the tree falleth, there it shall be." (Eccl. 11:3.) If this has any relation to man's future, it indicates that whatever his condition when he enters the tomb, no change takes place until he is awakened out of it. All Scripture bearing on the subject uniformly teaches this.

ALL TO BE BROUGHT TO A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH

Since God does not propose to save men on account of ignorance, but "will have *all men* to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4); and since the masses of mankind have died in ignorance; and since "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" (Eccl. 9:10); therefore, God has prepared for the awakening of the dead, in order to knowledge, faith and salvation. Hence his Plan is, that "as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive, but each one in his own order" - the Gospel Church, the Bride, the Body of Christ, first; afterward, during the Millennial Age, all who become his during the thousand years of his "presence" (mistranslated coming), the Lord's due time for all to know him, from the least to the greatest. (1 Cor. 15:22.) Thus the hope of the world lies beyond the Lord's return.

As death came by the first Adam, so life comes by Christ, the Second Adam. Everything that mankind lost through being in the first Adam is to be restored to those who believe in the Second Adam. When awakened, with the advantage of experience with evil, which Adam lacked, those who thankfully accept redemption as God's gift may continue to live everlastingly on the original condition of obedience. Perfect obedience will be required, and perfect ability to obey will be given, under the righteous reign of the Prince of Peace. Here is the salvation offered to the world. This will not mean that God will coerce the world into a state of salvation in the future Age. In that day of full knowledge and opportunity, only those who accept the message and reform and become obedient thereto, will be restored to everlasting life. Others who willfully reject the way of righteousness under the reign of Christ, will be judged incorrigible and will be ultimately destroyed in the "Second Death" from which there will be no recovery. - Acts 3:23; Rom. 6:23.

THE JEWS WILL BE BROUGHT OUT OF THEIR GRAVES AND PUT IN THEIR OWN LAND -- Ezek. 37:12-14

St. Peter tells us that this restitution is spoken of by the mouth of all the holy Prophets. (Acts 3:19-21.) They do all teach it. Ezekiel says of the valley of dry bones, "These bones are the whole house of Israel." And God says to Israel, "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I . . . shall put my spirit in you, and I shall place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." - Ezek. 37:11-14.

To this, the words of St. Paul agree (Rom. 11:25, 26) -- "Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles [the elect company, the Bride of Christ] be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved," or brought back from their cast -- off condition; for "God hath not cast off his people which he foreknew." (Verse 2.) They were cast off from his favor while the Bride of Christ was being selected, but will be reinstated when that work is accomplished. (Verses 28-33.) The prophecies are full of statements of how God will plant them again, and they shall be no more plucked up. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, . . . I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." (Jer. 24:5-7; 31:28; 32:40-42; 33:6-16.) These cannot refer merely to restorations from former captivities in Babylon, Syria, etc., for they have since been plucked up.

EVERY MAN WHO DIES THEN SHALL DIE FOR HIS OWN SINS

Furthermore, the Lord says, "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge, but every one [who dies] shall die for his own iniquity." (Jer. 31:29, 30.) This is not the case now. Each does not die now for his own sin, but for Adam's sin -- "In Adam all die." He ate the sour grape of sin, and our fathers continued to eat them, entailing further sickness and misery upon the children, thus hastening the penalty, death. The day in which "every man [who dies] shall die for his own sin," only, is the Millennial or Restitution Day.

Though many of the prophecies and promises of the future blessing seem to apply to Israel only, it must be remembered that they were a typical people and hence the promises made to them, while sometimes having a special application to themselves, generally have also a wider application to the whole world of mankind which that nation typified. While Israel as a nation was typical of the world, its priesthood was typical of the "little flock," the Head and Body of Christ, the "royal priesthood"; and the sacrifices, cleansings, and atonements made for Israel typified the "better sacrifices," fuller cleansings and real atonement "for the sins of the whole world," of which they are a part.

Seeing, then, that so many of the great and glorious features of God's Plan for human salvation lie in the future, and that the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus is the designed first step in the accomplishment of those long promised and long expected blessings, shall we not even more earnestly long for the time of his Second Advent than the less informed Jew longed for the First Advent?

In view of the foregoing Scripture testimony as to the object and purpose of our Lord's return, we are prepared to recognize the great importance that logically attaches to the *time* as well as the *signs* or indications which mark the appearing and presence of earth's new King and the exercise of his power in the affairs of men.

"Watch, therefore; for ye know not the day* your Lord doth come." "What I say unto you, I say unto all [believers], Watch!" - Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:37.

*Thus read the old Greek MSS.

The exhortation to watch for an event whose precise time is not stated implies that the watching ones will know when the event does take place. Watch, because ye know not, in order that at the proper time ye may know, is the thought; and the intimation clearly is, that those who do not watch will not know; that the events which are to be known in due time to the Watchers will be recognized by them, and not recognized by others, at the time of accomplishment.

The Apostle Paul urges us, saying: "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, and when they [the world, unbelievers] shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon *them* as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:24); because, being children of the light, ye brethren will be watching and be enlightened and taught of the Lord.

-- C. T. Russell

(To be concluded in next issue)

Israel Today

*"Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel."
- Jeremiah 2:4*

Jerusalem, April 20, 1959

The theory that the ten tribes of Israel were not swallowed up among the nations, but joined the exiles of Judah in Babylon at the time of exile, was advanced at the Seventh Annual Bible Study Congress held in the Holy City last week. This four -- day gathering, sponsored by the Israel Society for Biblical Research, convened at the Binyanei Ha-ooma (The Great Convention Center). Mr. Yisrael Heller, a Tel Aviv teacher, cited many references from the Book of Ezekiel which he says tend to show not only that the ten tribes fused with the Babylonian exiles but that Ezekiel himself took an active part in bringing this about. The speaker called attention to two meetings Ezekiel had with "the elders of Israel." From the context he deduces that it is clear that the reference is to the ten tribes. Mr. Heller also drew attention to the phrase, "the entire house of Israel" - unique to Ezekiel -- which he interprets as meaning Israel and Judah together.

We attended the opening sessions of this Bible Study Congress. All the addresses were delivered in Hebrew, of course. We heard Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion give one of the principal talks, as he is an active member of the Biblical Research Society. We found that about 1500 were in the audience. The Bible enthusiasts who assembled for the four day marathon, at which thirty six lectures were given, were a variegated group. What especially impressed us was the very large percentage of young people who were present, and then too, many of the older ones were really only in their 40's and 50's, and a small proportion of the total audience had grey hair. Furthermore, from our observation, no more than half the men, or less, had their heads covered, which means that many were not what would be termed orthodox. It should be emphasized that very few rabbis actually participated in this annual Bible Study Congress. It is a laymen's group. We were amazed to see how many persons came into the auditorium equipped with a Bible and referred to verses cited by the speakers, and as the discourses were delivered, copious notes were being made by people all around us.

This year's goal at the Congress was a better understanding of the Books of Jeremiah, the last of the great pre-exilic prophets, and Ezekiel, the first prophet of the captivity. The brethren who are convention goers will appreciate this observation made *by The Jerusalem Post*:

"It is doubtful whether *any* of the Bible devotees heard every one of the thirty six lectures delivered at the Seventh Annual Bible Study Congress. According to an officer of the Israel Society for Biblical Research, which sponsors the congresses, one man last year tried to listen to every lecture. He fainted."

In greeting the Congress, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion said that if it were not for the Bible, Israel would never have returned to its land. No book in the world had exerted so great an influence on any nation as the Bible had on Israel. Science, Mr. Ben-Gurion observed, teaches us only how to do things -- it cannot teach men what to do -- that we can learn from the prophets of Israel, and only here in the land of its birth could we understand the Bible properly.

Some of the lectures were highly specialized, such as Mr. Amnon Gaber's analysis of the phrase, "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim." (Jer. 25:1.) Others were more popular in nature, as was Dr. Ze'ev Vilnay's talk on "Anathoth and Jerusalem in Jeremiah's Life." Best of all, perhaps, were those lectures which could appeal to the scholar and the Bible -- trained layman alike. In this category were the addresses by Mr. Yehuda Elitzur on "The Theory of Diaspora in Jeremiah and Ezekiel" and by Mr. Yitzhak Shalev on "The Relationship Between Jeremiah and Zedekiah."

In the closing speech, delivered by Mr. Zalman Shazar, Acting Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, he said that it would be difficult to imagine the existence of the Jewish people today if it had not been for the prophets. Mr. Shazar contrasted the status of the Bible today in Israel and the Diaspora. Here, despite all our ideological differences, there is not a school in which the Bible is not taught, he said, but in other countries only a minority of the Jews have a familiarity with the Bible.

While the membership of the Israel Society for Biblical Research represents many shades of differences of interpretation, it is good to see so many of Jacob's posterity being willing, in peace and quiet, to consider one another's views, as is true at these annual Bible Study Congresses. Furthermore, it was especially noteworthy that this year's deliberations were centered upon the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, both of which have so much prophetic content regarding the restoration of Israel.

The press in Israel carried daily dispatches covering the sessions of the Israel Bible Study Congress. Before the nine o'clock newscast each night the Kol Israel (national radio station) gave a brief review of what was said at the Congress. (It will be of interest to the friends to know that every evening in the year Kol Israel features a Scripture reading.)

It has been announced that next year's Congress will be devoted to the three wisdom books -- Job, Psalms and Proverbs.

FROM SOCIALISM TO PROPHETIC JUDAISM

Since coming to Israel eight months ago, we have seen Mr. Ben-Gurion in public and heard him speak several times, in English as well as in Hebrew, and one cannot help but sense the admiration that wells up in the hearts of the people here for this pioneer, scholar, and dedicated leader of his people, who has weathered many storms during the past half century in the struggle for statehood and the consolidation of the nation. In speaking of "B-G" (as he is so often referred to), some one has well stated that he could not be defined as a politician, because a politician looks to the next election, but rather *as* a true statesman, because he looks to the next generation.

Over the decades there has been a very evident change in the thinking of this doughty little man. In reviewing the two volumes recently produced in Hebrew entitled *Ben-Gurion's World of Ideas*, G. Yoseph makes this significant analysis of David Ben-Gurion:

"Even his turning in recent years from socialism to prophetic Judaism was foreshadowed in his beginnings. Today Mr. Ben-Gurion is the foremost exponent of the new Israeli mentality. His startling 'protestant' interpretation of the Bible and the going back to the 'authentic' Judaism of the First Temple, which breaks a tradition of at least 2500 years, reflects the change of circumstances in which we find ourselves."

No doubt to many this is a revelation, but to the very close observers of the Israel scene, this has been noted for some time -- Ben-Gurion's change of thinking and the break with "the traditions of the elders," bringing about the "new Israeli mentality," to which Mr. Yoseph refers.

This has been giving the rabbis no undue concern. For instance, at the Convention of Religious Teachers Organization, just held here, Chief Rabbi Unterman of Tel Aviv expressed disapproval of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's declaration of faith made at the opening session of the Israel Bible Study Congress and stated that while "it is encouraging to see that Bible study is on the increase in this country, at the same time it should be remembered that the study of the Bible should be accompanied by a study of the Talmud and rabbinic interpretation." At times the rabbis are even more bold, and make it plain to the Israeli that it is forbidden to study only the Bible, without the oral law and the Scriptural interpretations of the sages.

"WHO IS A JEW"

The highly controversial issue of legally defining who is a Jew in Israel, is still unresolved here. The members of the United Religious Party (Mizrachi and Hapoel Mizrahi) in the Israel Cabinet resigned at the end of last June in protest over the identity cards issued by the Minister of Interior, which permitted any Israeli to list himself as Jewish by his own decision.

To get a consensus of opinion on this matter, Mr. Ben-Gurion took the initiative of writing some of the leading Jewish scholars the world over. Premier Ben-Gurion himself has taken a very firm position on the definition of a Jew and has drawn on Jewish Scriptures to support his view. The Prime Minister cited the fifteenth Psalm, in a letter to Rabbi Judah L. Maimon, first Minister of Religions in Israel, who had sent a communication to the Prime Minister in behalf of the decision of the United Religious party to quit the coalition on the issue.

(Psalm 15 defines as he "who shall sojourn" in the Tabernacle of the Lord, the individual who is righteous, speaks the truth, does not slander or do other evil to his fellow, does not reproach his neighbor, despises a vile person, fears the Lord, testifies truthfully even if it hurts him to do so, does not loan money for interest or take a bribe against the innocent.)

Asserting that Psalm 15 "is the essence of Jewishness," the Prime Minister asked: "Why should he that observes the Sabbath and Kashruth [dietary laws] be considered a Jew but he who lives according to the Psalmist's definition not be considered a Jew?"

Extracts from Mr. Ben -- Gurion's lengthy letter to Rabbi Maimon revealed that the government does not intend to legislate on religious matters. "The government decision," the Premier wrote, "is not binding on rabbis in matters of marriage and divorce."

While the proclamation of Israel's independence declared freedom of religion and conscience to be among the basic principles of the State of Israel, Mr. Ben-Gurion continued, it did not say that the Jewish State should be governed by religious law, but on the contrary that the state should not be theocratic in nature. "The state guaranteed every Jew who wishes to observe religious law all facilities to do so and has undertaken the obligation to make provision for the religious needs of the public at state expense, though there are undoubtedly in the state many people who do not observe religious law," he said. "As far as I know there is not a single person in the government or Knesset, not excluding the Communists, who has any idea of preventing a religious Jew from observing the 613 Commandments [Maimonides' Code] in their entirety."

The letter further declares that the government does not consider itself authorized to decide who is a religious Jew. The question it had to consider was who is a Jew by nationality. "It is a fact," Mr. Ben -- Gurion wrote, "perhaps a bitter fact, that in matters of religion and religious law there is no unity among the Jewish people, and in America there are Orthodox, Conservative, Liberal, and Reform rabbis. There are many Jews who belong to neither one or the other, but are in my opinion Jews as long as they do not become converted to another religion."

The letter concluded by stating that many persons believe that they belong to the Jewish people although they do not observe Jewish law. As long as he remains in the government, Mr. Ben-Gurion pledged, he would endeavor to prevent strife over religion. "I see danger in a war against religion and in a war for religion," he warned.

PURIM IS A GAY OCCASION

In the course of a year there are many national holidays in the Jewish State, but what makes the holidays here different from those in most other countries is that practically every one has a Biblical derivation. In a couple of days the Passover week will commence, which has a more solemn connotation than Purim, which was joyfully celebrated the last week in March.

The Purim festival commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people in the days of Esther. Every year Tel Aviv is the focal point for the Purim festivities. This year an estimated 500,000 persons lined the streets of this city to view the jubilee "adloyada" (carnival) procession. Five thousand school children, masquerading in gay costumes depicting Queen Esther, Mordecai, Haman, Ahasuerus, etc., as well as fifteen bands and many attractive and ingenious floats, most of them illustrating the Purim story, paraded before one quarter of the total population of the nation.

As we witnessed the celebrations, we were moved by the ordinance recorded in Esther, "that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed." - Esther 9:28.

*(Foregoing is the eighth report from the Land of Promise, from Brother Casimir Lanowick,
Editor of Jews in the News. - Ed. Com.)*

The Law of Attraction

"With loving kindness have I drawn thee." - Jer. 31:3.

THE law of attraction is a universal law in all God's wide domain. The planets are all subject to it, and swing in their orbits in response thereto. The sun and moon affect our earth through the operation of this law, and ocean tides speak of its force and marvels. The far off ocean calls to the rivulets away in distant hills, and in answer to that call the lesser streams are attracted to the greater ocean bound rivers, and all flow onward until the mighty streams come to rest in the depths by which they were so effectively drawn. But the circle of attraction continues on and on. The rays of the sun sweep over the wide expanse of the ocean depths lifting its waters to the clouds again. The forest covered hills and mountains, the fields of waving grain and meadow, attract it back to earth in dewdrop and rain. Thus the land is refreshed to supply the needs of man, and the streams are kept flowing for the thirsty hart, and for cattle on a thousand hills.

In all this we may see illustrated a law of attraction by which our spiritual life is nurtured and developed. Our love for God, we are told, is the response to his love for us. "We love God, *because* he first loved us." It is of this attractive influence we sing, "he drew me with the cords of love, and thus he bound me to him." He has made us so that our only complete satisfaction is found in drinking deeply from the fountain of his grace. His Word teaches us this lesson, and in the world about us there are many illustrations of its application. As the ocean draws the many scattered streams from the distant hills onward to itself, so does the wideness of God's love and mercy draw us to himself, the embodiment of all love -- excelling. As the hart pants for the waters of the cooling stream, and in seeking it follows a law inherent in its nature, so our soul's seeking after God is the perfect conformity of our spirit answering to the drawings of his Spirit. The vine which may begin its life in the dark recesses of a pit will never cease to struggle toward the sunlight, nor rest content until it is waving in the light toward which an unseen power was drawing it. It could not remain unaffected by the pull of the light for which it had its inherent affinity. So we too are drawn by a law of spiritual attraction toward an environment which God has made our true realm of life in fulness. He works by this law leading us to will and to do his good pleasure. In its workings this law drawing us Godward grows stronger as our spiritual life progresses toward its intended goal. The prayer for a closer walk with God becomes ever more fervent as the heart response to his love expands. The true testimony of his power working effectively in our hearts is therefore found in this never -- ending longing for the fullest comprehension of his grace. What a happy experience it is to know that there is a law working in us and for us whereby we become conscious of being led from grace to grace, from one degree of spiritual understanding to another yet greater vision of God's complete will. What is this but confessing that "the half has never yet been told"? Is it not giving reality to our oft repeated words, "Heaven is nearer and Christ is dearer, than yesterday to me"? Only as this law of attraction and answering -- response prevails in our lives will we ever reach the possible attainments represented in God's loving will for us. He is ever calling us toward greater things, and so our language should always be, "Where he leads me I will follow, I'll go with him all the way."

Let the river in its course toward the ocean teach us the beauty of this which is God's way. The river flows continually toward the ocean, its appointed rest. In its flow it grows wider and deeper because it receives from all contributing streams along its *way*. Each little stream adds a quota to its depth and strength. It begins in the far -- away hills, a tiny stream. As it flows onward gathering volume as it progresses, there will be many winding curves, many noisy rapids, and some projecting rocks around which it will swirl in foaming haste and roar. But as the stream nears the ocean, its flow will gradually become a more quiet and even progress. The turbulent

haste is gone and the undercurrents are stronger. At last it reaches the inflowing tides and merges imperceptibly and without commotion into the congenial environment of the larger waters which all along its way had been mysteriously affecting it.

Applying the illustration to our spiritual life, how is it with us now, as the numerous signs of the times, and as well. the facts of age tell us that life's course will soon be completed? Surely the law of spiritual affinities has been drawing us onward through the years in ways that have left the marks of progress. By that law maturity in spiritual vision should have come, giving evidence that we have been with Jesus and learned of him the deeper facts of eternal life. The powerful attraction of eternal realities must have grown increasingly evident in an abundance of the heart of which the mouth habitually speaks. We will have learned the necessity of letting all contributing streams of spiritual knowledge add to the volume of our understanding of the whole will. of God. Comprehending with all saints thus, will have widened the horizon of all truth, and deepened the currents of Christ's intended fellowship among his people in a true unity of the Spirit. It is now a far call for most of us since the day we took our first steps in the narrow way; the years have come and, gone, filled with opportunities to grow in grace and knowledge. The great ocean of eternity is now just a little further on. In what measure have we attained the stability of character and. quietness of spirit indicating readiness for a merging of the present life into the greater life soon to be given to those made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?

Life's sun is sinking westward now, and as it nears the points of its setting beyond the horizon, what will it bring of glory into these closing years? We should want it to be like one of those glorious sunsets when another law of God paints the western sky in a glory no human artist can reproduce. What beauty tints the lingering clouds, spreading a richness of splendor over the sphere where earth and heaven seem to blend in a glory that excelleth. We behold it all, and say, how beautiful is the ending of a perfect day! The heat of the day is over, and the winds have gone to rest. Day is slipping quietly out through the portals of the western sky, and the night of sleep comes to give rest to the weary toilers. How gracious all God's arrangements are! "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." - Psalm 19:2.

So should it be with us as our course is nearing its great consummation hour. There should be a quieting and a deepening of our experience as we draw near "the shining shore" before us. There is our home, and an entering into a completion and perfection for which we have yearned. There is our rest, where no more painful limitations of mind or body will leave us seeking on and on for something instinctively recognized as yet unattained. There hearts which have longed to see the face of God, and the face of him whose image we are to bear, will never need to ask again, "Face to face, what shall it be?" Then the stream of life over which the love of God drew us, will have merged into the life that shall endless be, a life full of all that an unfettered immortal life can mean. In numberless ways we have had verifications of our Lord's good word of promise, as he has said to us, as to others, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." We praise him for those cords of love which naught of evil forces, or of our own failures, has severed. In love he redeemed us and drew us to himself, and that love attracts us still as nothing else can do.

-- J. J. Blackburn

The Messiah of Jewish Hopes

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." - Psa. 110:1.

IN this verse, David, writing under the influence of God's holy spirit, reports a revelation of Jehovah's intention in regard to Messiah. In vision he, David, heard Jehovah addressing one, who though David's son, was yet his superior. David heard Jehovah say to this great One: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Let us now examine the Scriptures in proof that this understanding is correct.

That the Psalm was written by David is a fact accepted by most scholars of repute. To begin with, it bears a superscription which reads "A Psalm of David"; thus, on its very surface, it claims to have been written by him. Moreover, in the New Testament our Lord Jesus himself evidences his belief that David wrote it. (Matt. 22:43; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42.) Not only so, but Jesus declares also that when David wrote this Psalm he was "in spirit," that is to say, he was aided and guided by, or under the influence or control of, the holy spirit of God. Accepting this New Testament confirmation of the fact that David was the author of our Psalm, it follows that the expression, "my Lord," means David's Lord; that is to say, David's Master, his Superior, his "Adon."

However, the first occurrence of the word Lord refers not to David's Adon, but to Jehovah. This is signified by the fact that here the word "Lord" appears, in most Bibles, in small capital letters. The meaning may be seen more clearly by reference to the *Revised Version*, which reads:

"Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Just now we referred to Matthew 22:43. Let us read that verse, together with the four verses which form its context, and note the additional light they throw on this inspired statement of the Psalmist. Commencing with Matt. 22:41 and reading from the Revised Version:

"Now while the Pharisees were gathering together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in the spirit call him Lord, saying,

"The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet?"

"If David calleth him Lord, how is he his son?"

Considering these verses carefully we note, first, that in asking the Pharisees, "What think ye of the Christ?" our Lord was not asking them what they thought about himself. True, he was the Christ, but he was not, in this question, insisting on that title. Rather, he is drawing them out. It is as though he had asked: "What have your studies of the Old Testament led you to understand is to be true of the great Messiah, when he comes? Whose son, whose descendant is he to be?" There was, of course, only one reply for them to make: "The son of David." This was common knowledge. The Scriptures had established this fact beyond question. (See, for example, 2 Sam. 7:8-17; Psa. 89: 3, 4; :Psa. 132:11; Amos 9:11.) Not only the :Pharisees, but the masses of the people, too, were well aware that Messiah was to be of David's line. - See Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; Luke 1:32.

Yes, all were agreed that according to the predictions of the Prophets, the Messiah was to be a son of David, and the heir of his throne. But now, having by this preliminary query prepared the way for his main question, our Lord puts It to them: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" "How do you explain this remarkable language which David employs here, in Psalm 110:1? What is the reason that justified -- nay, what is the reason that, under the influence of the holy spirit, impelled David to call him Lord?"

It is easy for us, with the New Testament in our hands, to answer our Lord's question. David's son was David's Lord, in the prophetic vision unfolded to David which he records in this Psalm, because, at the time that vision would meet its fulfillment, this great son of his would have become his Lord. Following his birth as a babe, he would have pursued the path marked out for him by the Father to, and beyond, Calvary. Highly exalted as a reward for his faithfulness, he would now become the Everlasting Father of the human race. As such he would be David's Father David's Life giver. (See Isa. 9:6; Rev. 22:16.) By his question, then, our Lord intimates to the Pharisees that, understanding merely that Messiah was to be a son of David, and failing to understand this verse, which declared that Messiah was also to be David's Lord, they had but a poor, outside, view of the real nature, character, and work of the long promised Messiah. It was not a mere monarch, somewhat like David, that was needed. It was one who was fit to be David's monarch, and the monarch of all monarchs, one who would have power with God, and whose throne might be established in the hearts of men.

This Psalm is quoted not only by our Lord in Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts, but also elsewhere in the New Testament. The first verse is quoted by Peter in his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost, a sermon which carried conviction to the minds of three thousand hearers. - Acts 2:34, 35, 41.

In 1 Cor. 15:25 we are told that Christ "must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet" -- language which is quite evidently borrowed from David.

Again, in the first chapter of Hebrews, verse 13, the inspired writer, in showing the supreme excellence of the Christian dispensation, over the past, and the vast superiority of Christ over all the angelic order of beings, exclaims triumphantly in concluding his argument: "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," as God did say to Jesus the Messiah, as you will find recorded in the 110th Psalm of David. This is the culminating point of the writer's argument, and its force rests upon the universal acknowledgment of his hearers that this Psalm referred to the Messiah, and that there was only one being in all the universe so high, so exalted, so powerful, to whom its language could be applicable, and that that being was David's Son and David's Lord.

Nor are we left in doubt as to the occasion in the experience of our Lord when this prophetic utterance of David would meet fulfillment. Would it be when Jehovah brought him into existence as the mighty Logos? Did Jehovah *then say* to him: "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Was it when his life was transferred to earth as a babe at Bethlehem? Was it when he consecrated himself at Jordan? No! it was on none of these occasions. It was when, following his death and resurrection he ascended to heaven. Have we a Scripture to prove this? Yes, indeed. Hear the writer to the Hebrews 10:12-13:

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."

And again, in Ephesians 1:19-22, where the Apostle speaks of the mighty power of God:

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand ... and put all things under -- his feet."

Peter, too, takes up a similar strain, when in 1 Peter 3:22, he speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

Concerning the Messiah of Jewish hopes we have found in the foregoing discussion at least two things taught in the Scriptures, and condensed in Psa. 110:1:

(1) He must be a descendant of David.

(2) He must also be David's superior.

Paul was a man highly educated in the Old Testament Scriptures. Note the following from his pen, which testify that Jesus possessed these two qualifications:

"Remember [Timothy] that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel." - 2 Tim. 2:8.

Yes -- whatever else Timothy forgot, he must remember this, and maintain it in his teaching.

Again, in Romans 1:3, 4 in what has been called the "Gospel according to Paul," he writes of that Gospel:

"Concerning his son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Just a word in closing: Jehovah is heard, by David, addressing Messiah: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." How shall we understand these words?

According to an able commentator (Perowne) this expression "denotes that the person thus honored occupied the second place in the Kingdom, taking rank immediately after the King, and also sharing as viceroy in the government."

If such be the meaning, if the solemn address, "Sit thou at my right hand," is equivalent to saying, "Be thou associated with me in my kingly dignity, in my power and universal dominion," then the best comment on the passage is to be found in Daniel 7:13, 14, where one like the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven and is brought unto the Ancient of Days, and there is given him a kingdom and glory and a dominion, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. The two passages, the one from the Psalms and the other from Daniel, are in fact combined by our Lord himself, when, standing before the High Priest, he says: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." - Matt. 26:63, 64; Mark 14:61, 62.

-- P. L. Read

"The Word of God"

"The Word of God is quick and powerful." - Hebrews 4:12.

THIS is one of the great texts of the Bible -- a statement of truth at once profound and inexhaustible. It has its source in the personality of God himself, its channel in the person of the Logos -- in later times our Lord Jesus Christ -- and its concluding effects in those inexplicable experiences in his saints where conscience reigns supreme.

Sometimes it is applied to the Holy Book which we affectionately term the Bible, and, as a consequence, an aura of sanctity is accorded to the Book in a most exclusive sense, a sanctity accorded to no other book no matter how it may have helped in the molding of our lives. The reading of the Bible is held by all good men to be infinitely more essential to our growth in knowledge and in grace than the reading of the best commentaries and dissertations that the world's libraries contain. And experience has proved, and still continues to prove, that comparative assertion true.

But the text contains much more than a reference to the printed book, peerless and incomparable though the book may be. The Word of God may be embodied "in" the words of the book, but it is much more than the words. It is the living thought of God, seeking to reveal and disclose itself through the languages of men.

It is most essential that we remember its place as it stands in the argument of this Epistle. It begins with the great idea of "God speaking," and it is this great idea which carries through to our text. "The Word of God" maintains the idea of "God speaking" still.

In the introductory passage of Chapter One, we read that God "at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets," and that "in these last times" he has been speaking unto us *by* a Son -- literally "in" a Son. Neither the Prophets nor the Son spake "of" or "from" themselves, but only as God gave them utterance.

We cannot read this first section of Hebrews without being reminded of the first words in Genesis: "In the beginning, God." In that place and in this -- indeed, in every place in Holy Writ, that is the first implication. The first step in faith is to believe that God "is"; the next to believe that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.

All through the "time past," the word spoken was the "Word of God," not only the word of prophet, priest, or king. When they thundered forth the arresting words, "Thus saith the Lord," it was intended to blazon forth the fact that it was the declaration of God, through the prophet's lips, and that it would be avouched and underwritten by the act of God, if necessary. As such, it cowed and subdued haughty king or stubborn peasantry. All Scripture given by inspiration was the Word of God, and as such emanated and flowed forth from the mind of God.

THE MESSAGE SUPREME

Not less is this true when the mind of God was and is expressed in or through "the Son." Jesus came to earth as his "messenger," bringing with him words and thoughts which had been given him by his Father. "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him ... as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. . . . I speak that which I have seen with my Father.... He that is of God heareth God's words." - John 8:26, 28, 38, 47.

"The Word of God" in our text is, therefore, "God still speaking" through his appointed messenger. That it is still personal (a messenger), and not theoretical (a message) is amply demonstrated by the next verse: "Him with whom we have to do," from whose "sight" nothing can be hid. Whether the "him" here described is God, or Jesus, makes no difference to the force or sense of the passage, though the connections within and following the text incline one to say that the person of our Lord Jesus, as the great High Priest, is intended.*

* In support of this view *Rotherham, Houle*, and others have pointed out a preferred translation: "All things are naked and exposed to his eyes -- as to whom is our discourse." (Italics ours) -- *Ed. Com.*

But every messenger must have a message and must deliver it faithfully if sender, messenger, and message are to operate as one. Hence, though differentiation between them is very necessary in order that they may be seen in their respective relationships to each other, cohering is just as necessary for the allocation of final authority for what is being said.

In the "time past" God's message had been tentative and fragmentary; in these "last days" it is final and complete. Not that all men have heard or will hear it during this present Church period. None the less the finality of God's speech to men through his Son is most definitely asserted in the opening passages, and argued for throughout the whole range of the Epistle. There is never to be another Messenger, but the delivery of the message is to be according to the times, and according to the needs of the men involved. Thus the Messenger has a message today appropriate for this Gospel Age, but, at its close, a further installment of the message, appropriate to the Age to come, will be made by him, and by those acting under him. This is quite in line with the time factors of the Book of Hebrews -- it begins by speaking of the "world to come whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5); it depicts some of the blessings which the true believer enjoys as "the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5); it encourages believers to wait patiently under present distress "yet a little while" till "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37); while its final picture is that of the complete gathering to Mount Zion of the whole assembly of the Elect Church, of just men made perfect (Ancient Worthies), of a New Covenant (newly made), of God as the judge of all (or alternatively as a judge who is God of all), and of Jesus, the illustrious One who has mediated the newly made Covenant between God and the House of Israel (Heb. 12:22-24); and all this long period is the "speaking period" of God, by the Son, which, in one single brief word is descriptively styled "Today" (Heb. 4:7) -- a "today" spanning the centuries from Jesus' baptism long ago, to that better day, when, Israel gathered and restored, is fit and ready to enter again into Covenant relationship with her God.

A BOOK, A PERSONALITY, A MESSAGE

The Word (Logos) of God is thus not merely a Book but a Personality, the Living Word -- plus the message which proceeds from his mouth at this or that stage of the Plan, according as need requires. That this message has been embodied in a book is a fact no enlightened student of its pages will dispute, but that the message is there for all and sundry to take at their wish is not true. Thousands read the Holy Book, but it yields no message to them. Thousands more dissect and carve it up -- this part to J, that part to P, etc., etc. - but it falls to pieces, meaningless and purposeless in their hands. Others use it to pile text on text to prove what they desire, only to find fetters and shackles firm -- riveted on heart and mind. The truth of the matter is that the Book is a textbook, but it needs a Teacher to explain it. And that Teacher is the one chosen by God, long ago. God's illuminating power (his holy spirit) acting on the spoken (and written) Word makes it live and operate; without that holy power the Book is dead. Without that power it is of no greater influence than the works of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, or other earthly sage. The message without its Messenger and Author is impotent, inert, and pointless, and does not do the work it was sent to do.

But with the Messenger and Author behind it (or with it), how amazingly and wonderfully it operates! It dissects and divides between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow, and discerns even the very thoughts and intents of the heart.

The word -- picture here is drawn from the thoroughness and carefulness of the priestly scrutiny as he slew and prepared the animal for sacrifice. The word *tetrachelismena* from *trachelizo* in verse 13 (opened to the eyes of him) means to "bend back the neck" and thus leave the throat exposed. This was the first stage of the sacrificial work as the priest brought down the keen blade upon the throat of the victim stretched before him. With the same keen blade the priest, after proper drainage of the blood, proceeded to dissect joint from joint, organ from organ, opening up to view even the marrow in the bones.

Every hair was searched, every joint examined, every organ scrutinized with extreme thoroughness, and thus, the priest himself satisfied, the freewill gift was passed and permitted to be offered to God in worship and sacrifice. The internal economy of the lamb (or other animal) was set naked and opened before the eyes of the sacrificing priest.

Thus is the believer opened up before the eyes of him with whom we have to do, by the sharp cutting instrument, sharper than any two-edged sword. The Word of God -- the Living Personality of the great High Priest -- opens up for scrutiny and inspection the surrendered personality of the saint, by the sharp cutting action of his Holy Word, separating between the desires of the flesh and those of the spirit -- the new creature. It divides between those emotions and intentions springing from the exercise of our five natural senses -- seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching -- whereby we influence or are influenced by our fellowmen, and their spiritual counterparts, by means of which we are able to hold communion with God. Then the figurative application of the joints and the marrow could well represent the difference between the form and the essence, the extrinsic and the intrinsic appearance of every act, word, or thought.

DISCERNER OF THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE HEART

Thus, there is no act or word or thought, nor any motive, emotion, or intent which is beyond the sharp -- cutting edge of the Word of God. It is a discerner (Greek, *kritikos*, able to judge) of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It can thus sit in judgment, in the seat of conscience, upon belief and unbelief, upon right -- doing and wrong, upon true thinking and false, and determine for us the uprightness or deceit of every motion of the soul. With a balance more infinitely sensitive than the apothecary's scales it can weigh up the righteousness or unrighteousness of every intent, and indicate to which side our leaning inclines.

"Quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" . . . Christ Jesus our Lord is very concerned about these, because what a man thinks, that he will be sooner or later, in life. We must expect to have our most secret thoughts, relations, and purposes questioned, criticized, and measured by Jesus, the Living Word, through the precepts of the Bible -- the written Word. No court of inquiry was ever presided over by a more exacting Inquisitor than this. He is the critic of all the secrets of the heart, and as each thought or intention rises and begins to take effect, he searches it through and through.

Where does the intangible line of demarcation between soul and spirit come? Where does the one end and the other begin? We cannot tell, but the Word of God knows! For instance, if we are tired and overwrought, would the claims of the natural life have precedence over those of the new creature? -- tired to go to the Class meeting, but not too tired to go to work! Or that use of our resources? -- too much to give for a spiritual cause, but not too much to spend on ourselves! Or that artistic mood? -- too boring to sing a hymn of praise, but not too boring to play Mendelssohn or Mozart, *et al!*

Here is the battle -- ground for the child of God, and the conflict must last to his dying day. Spiritual seeing versus natural seeing; spiritual hearing versus natural hearing; spiritual tasting versus natural tasting; spiritual feeling versus natural feeling; spiritual touch versus natural touch -- which shall it be? And yet: it need not be the one or the other exclusively, so long as they are rightly placed and suitably followed. There is no criminality in our weariness and tiredness so long as it deters us from the natural as from the spiritual exercise. There is no wrong in the use of our resources if the spiritual receives not less attention than the natural. Good clothes, good furnishings, and good holidays can all be bought to the glory of God. Nor is there anything inappropriate in playing Mozart and Mendelssohn, if thereby a song of praise to the Most High is evoked.

It is to enable us to attain that end, and find the right balance between soul and spirit, between natural man and new creature, that the Word of God has come to preside in our lives. He has come to deal with the causes of unrest in the human compound personality. If strange and contradictory complexes lie at the center of our restlessness, he has come to disentangle them and set them in their right relationship. He enters and supervises the whole personality, distinguishing between what is spiritual and what is not, and determines for us not only what is right and true, but also what is best and life-promoting.

His dissecting knife bespeaks a life of sacrifice, it cuts part away from part, so that it may be laid in lowly worship before the Most High, yet, contemporaneously, his presiding Personality, dwelling in our inmost heart, separates, disentangles, and loosens up all the jangling, discordant, restless complexes, and brings them all to rest, straightened out, adjusted, balanced, because they find their place of rest in him.

Do not dread or fear the incoming of the Word of God into your heart of hearts, for close after these searching, scorching words, come those of comfort and hope. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which 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 unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Our Redeemer has passed this way too. The Word of God in his heart searched him out through and through. He too lay like the flayed, dissected victim 'neath his Father's searching gaze, as part after part was scrutinized, as joint and marrow were opened up and laid bare. But, thank God, there was no flaw or blemish in him. Soul and spirit, the natural and the spiritual, were at equipoise and rest in him.

His yoke was easy and his burden light; he touched life's deepest chords and was broken thereby. But for him the Cross was the prelude to the Crown. The reproaches of men broke his heart, but in that breaking he came to understand broken hearts, and thus it is that he is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him. Our hearts must be broken too if we are to help heal broken hearts in a coming day, but while they are on the breaking wheel, he is near to help and sustain. "He was tempted in all points like as we are," and thus he knows and cares.

The chosen High Priest of God has been given a twofold work on our behalf. He must slay and dissect our sacrifice; he must also comfort and console those that bring the sacrifice. In Israel, in time past, a goat, a lamb, or a bird suffered as the one; the presented of the goat, the lamb, or bird enjoyed the other. In these "last days" the twofold experience befalls the same man. He must bring himself as lamb, goat, or bird, and be slain as a man, but thank God, the same Hands that occasion his death, also wipe away his tears, soothe his fears, and set his heart to rest with the comfort of the Lord. Oh! that he may ever be to us the Word of God ... and our great High Priest, searching and comforting us simultaneously!

-- *T. Holmes*, Eng.

The Question Box

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." - Rev. 15:1.

Question:

What is the significance of the seven last plagues? Have they been fulfilled yet? If not, when will they be fulfilled?

Answer:

While we may not be too positive in our interpretation, it is our conviction that they symbolize the closing events of the Gospel Age; that the first six have been in process of fulfillment for a number of years, while -- the fulfillment of the seventh lies in the not far distant future. That they were foreshadowed and illustrated by the last seven of the ten plagues of Egypt seems clear. It will be helpful, therefore, if we first review those Egyptian plagues, reserving to next month a discussion of the seven mentioned in Rev. 15:1.

THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

Briefly stated, the story of Israel is a story of bondage and deliverance, a history of the thralldom of that nation to Egypt, and of its redemption therefrom under the mighty hand of God. The narrative is given in the second book of the Bible, the Book of Exodus, the word exodus signifying a departure, or a going forth, as of a multitude, from a place or country.

Following the death of Jacob and Joseph the Israelites had greatly increased in numbers, and fears were entertained by the Egyptians that in the event of war, the Israelites would prove the stronger. The student will recall that three attempts were made to keep their numbers down. First, hard taskmasters were placed over them, and they were required to work long and laboriously. Next, the midwives of the nation were instructed to strangle all male children at birth. Finding these two methods unavailing, a law was passed that all male children thereafter born of the Israelites should be thrown into the river Nile. How well this diabolical law succeeded we do not know. The narrative makes it plain, however, that it was overruled, in the Lord's providence, to provide a certain new -- born babe, Moses, with an education he probably would not otherwise have had. We remember that he was placed in a cradle, or ark, of bulrushes, and was providentially saved by Pharaoh's daughter, and brought up as her son, his own mother being employed to nurse him. Thus in a way little dreamed of by Pharaoh, God began the preparation of one who was destined to be the nation's deliverer, to be the one who, as an instrument in God's hands, was to lead the typical people out of bondage.

In due time, after he had eighty years of special training (forty years of instruction in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and forty more getting that sense of poise which comes from tending sheep and watching God's stars at night) Moses received his commission. We recall that he saw a bush which burned with fire, and yet was not consumed, apparently symbolizing the terrible afflictions which the nation was experiencing, yet without being destroyed; and we remember that God spoke to him out of the burning bush, assuring him that he had seen the nation's affliction, that he knew their sorrows, and that he was now about to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large, unto a land which floweth with milk and honey; and that he, Moses, was the one he had chosen to lead the people out. We remember how hesitant Moses was; and how slow to accept this high commission; how

Aaron was appointed to serve as his mouthpiece, and how God gave Moses three special signs -- credentials, as it were -- to convince Pharaoh that he stood before him as the representative of God, signs all deeply significant, but not close enough to our immediate subject to dwell on here.

THE FIRST THREE PLAGUES

The burden of God's message to Pharaoh was: "Let my people go." Over and over was this message reiterated by God's faithful servant, Moses, but without effect. And the narrative proceeds to show the various steps which the Lord took to break down Pharaoh's unwillingness and opposition. Ten plagues were visited upon him, steadily increasing in severity as they went on. First the waters of the Nile were turned into blood, destroying the fish and polluting the land for seven days. Next came a plague of frogs polluting the houses. In the case of these first two plagues, Pharaoh's magicians seem to have been able to duplicate them, doubtless by Satanic power, but when the third plague of lice or sand fleas arrived, they could not do so, but admitted that it was the finger of a God, although not necessarily the God of Moses -- the God of Israel. In the case of each plague Pharaoh relented, but -- as soon as the plague was lifted, he hardened his heart again.

ISRAEL EXEMPT FROM LAST SEVEN PLAGUES

When the fourth plague, that of flies, came, a line of separation was made between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Jehovah *thus* demonstrating that the plagues were not only from a God, as the magicians admitted, but that they came from *the* God, the God of Moses, the God of Israel. In predicting that plague God stated:

"And I will set apart in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies *shall* be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am Jehovah in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people. By tomorrow shall this sign be. And Jehovah did so. - .Exod. 8:22, 23.

Under pressure of this plague of flies Pharaoh promised to let Israel go, but his heart hardened again as soon as the flies were removed.

Followed next the fifth plague, that of murrain, a contagious fever or distemper affecting domestic animals, which swept away all the cattle of the Egyptians, but not one of those belonging to the Israelites.

The sixth plague of boils and blains, or tumors and ulcers, plagued not only men and cattle, but was especially on the magicians, who now acknowledged Moses' victory over them.

The seventh plague was a plague of hail and fire, causing much damage to man and beast, trees and herbs, and especially to the barley and flax; the wheat and spelt, (or rye) not yet being grown up. This seventh plague was preceded by special warning, and directions were given as to how to escape it. Not only so, but God, through Moses, warned Pharaoh of the folly of continuing his resistance, assuring him that it was not because He lacked the power that He had not already cut him off in death, and that it was quite impossible for him to gain a victory over Him, and that He was determined to accomplish the deliverance of Israel.

While Pharaoh's own heart remained stiff and obstinate, it is evident that the previous six plagues had brought about a change of sentiment on the part of some of his servants for we read:

"He that feared the word of Jehovah among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses; and he that regarded not the word of Jehovah left his servants and his cattle in the field." - Exod. 9:20, 21.

The Lord's special protection of his chosen is once again to be observed in connection with this plague, as we read:

"Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail." - Exod. 9:26.

The eighth plague, one of locusts, was sent to destroy what had escaped damage by the hail of the preceding plague, and we read:

"They did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left; and there remained not *any* green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt " - Exod. 10:15.

The ninth plague was a plague of darkness, a darkness so great as to be felt, which prevailed for three days; in connection with which we read:

"But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." - Exod. 10:23.

Of these nine plagues the first three seem to have been intended to pollute the land, while the second three were designed to manifest that the God of Israel was their Author. The last three, which followed in rapid succession, destroyed the crops, and paved the way for the tenth and last plague -- the death of the firstborns -- following which the deliverance of the nation was effected. To quote from the record:

"Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood [of the Passover lamb) upon the lintel and on the two sideposts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye are come to the land which Jehovah will give you according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass when your children shall *say* unto you, 'What mean ye by this service?' that ye shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of Jehovah's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.' And the people bowed the head and worshiped. And the children of Israel did so; as Jehovah had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

"And it came to pass, at midnight, that Jehovah smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, 'Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both -- ye, and the children of Israel, and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said. " - Exod. 12:23-31.

-- P. L. Read

Recently Deceased

Sr. O. L. Sullivan, Salem, N. J. - (Mar.)

Sr. Margaret Szkaradek, Harvey, Ill. - (Apr.)

Sr. Marie L. Watt, Temple City, Cal. - (Apr.)