

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. LIV July / August, 1971 No. 4

Free Indeed

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." - John 8:36.

THE love of freedom is inherent in all of God's intelligent creatures. Moreover, under certain limitations, it was manifestly his purpose that all enjoy liberty-the limitations, in every case, being those of righteousness, of respect of and submission to the divine law, and mutual love and respect for the rights and liberties of fellow creatures.

However, many have very different ideas of freedom from this. One of the world's great champions of human liberty -- Abraham Lincoln -- once said:

"We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word, we do not all mean the same thing. With some, the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor."

Again he wrote:

"The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act, as the destroyer of liberty. Plainly, the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty. "

As we look around us today, it seems evident that there are yet many men who have not repudiated the wolf's dictionary. Such are anxious to cast off all restraints of God and man, to pursue a selfish course, untrammelled, and without regard to either their obligations to God, or the rights of their fellow-men. Such ideas of freedom (2) lead only to anarchy and destruction. And those who hold them look upon all wholesome restraints of law and order as infringements of their rights, and consider themselves in bondage under them. This is the rapidly growing sentiment all over the world today among the masses of mankind. And this is what makes the outlook for the future so ominous, threatening the utter wreck of the present social order in world-wide anarchy.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE

There have been two main contributing causes which have operated to produce the liberty known and experienced in the world to date. One of these is the Bible. As we compare the various degrees of civilization throughout the world, and note that the wisest and best laws and the wisest and best execution of them and the greatest true liberty of the people within reasonable bounds are found in those nations which have most revered the divine message, the Bible, it is a strong argument that the Word of God has not only influenced the "little flock," who take it most seriously, and who lay aside every weight and hindrance and worldly ambition to run with patience in the footsteps of Jesus, but it has influenced the minds of many who have never taken this step of full consecration. In a word, the liberty wherewith Christ makes free is not the liberty of license but the liberty of reason, of justice, of love; and in proportion as any one has received the spirit of the divine teaching, in that same proportion he is a free man. We thank God, therefore, for the measure of national liberty which prevails throughout the world, even while we see clearly from the prophecies of the Scriptures, as well as written on the pages of the daily press, that a great misinterpretation of liberty is rapidly spreading throughout the world, which will eventually wreck the present civilization in anarchy.

THE FIGHT FOR LIBERTY

The second contributing cause of the liberty known and enjoyed by mankind up to the present time is warfare. We think it is not an overstatement to say that all, or nearly all, the liberty there is in the world today has been paid for; practically none of it has been attained without sacrifices. Why? Because selfishness is so entrenched in the race that those who possess power, authority, privilege, opportunity, would hold these for themselves to the disadvantage of others -- to the enslavement of others -- were not the rights and liberties fought for. Looking back over the history of nations and, regardless of one's views as to the propriety of a Christian engaging in warfare, every reasoning mind can see that only through wars have liberties come to the human race. The mistake that is being made by many today is the supposition that humanity would ever be able to attain the condition of absolute equality and unselfishness through wars or any other means within the power of Adam's race.

The Scriptures point out to us that there is a limit beyond which we must not expect selfish humanity to make progress -- that any progress beyond that limit must come from on High, through the establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear Son; that while wealth and influence and tail ends will yield to the pressure of the masses for their own protection and aggrandizement, they will not yield everything, but would permit the entire social structure to dissolve rather than to submit to a general equalization, such as is the aim of Socialism. Hence Socialism, while not intending anarchy, will produce anarchy; while striving for greater liberty and universality of blessings of earth, will effect a wreck of all these. Thanks be to God that his program is that on the wreck of present institutions he will establish the true reign of liberty on the plane of love, under the guidance of the Master and his joint-heirs

However, while we await that kingdom let us not despise one present national liberty, imperfect though it be. Usually blessings are valued rightly only when they are taken from us. It is not long since we were doing some sober thinking as to the possibility of losing our national liberty. Such thoughts should lead us to very earnest thankfulness to God that this liberty has been preserved to us. Nor should it be difficult for us to be grateful also to those who bore the brunt of the sacrifice, many of whom laid down life itself in the cause of freedom.

LIBERTY TO BECOME SONS OF GOD

From these reflections on the liberty known and experienced by mankind in general, let us now turn to another phase of our subject: "The glorious liberty of the children of God. " - Rom. 8:21.

Our Lord well knew that we might have all the inalienable rights mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, all the opportunities afforded by wealth, all the knowledge and skills resulting from higher education, and yet not be really and truly free, in his sense of the word. It was for this reason that he said to some who were beginning to have faith in him: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." - John 8:36.

St. Paul knew how true this was. He had the freedom which came as the result of having been born a Roman citizen. And yet he tells us, in Romans 7:19, that "the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Are these the words of a free man? No, indeed! These are the words, not of a free man, but of a slave.

Dearly as we may love liberty, there is no man who actually possesses it yet, for as the result of the fall of Adam all men became the slaves of Sin and, to a great extent, the tools of Satan; and never, until the promised restitution of all things is completed, will men enjoy the precious boon of liberty in its full sense. This is one of the elements of the Gospel, that Christ is to bring liberty to the captives of sin and death, and to let all the oppressed go free. - Isa. 61:1.

Of course, to those who believe that death itself is a great blessing, liberating our spirits from their present bondage to earthly conditions, the Gospel message is without meaning. But to us who have learned the true nature of man, and who know that he is mortal, and not only mortal, but dying, this promise of liberation from the prison-house of death, though stated centuries ago, holds our interest with a stronger grip than would tomorrow's headlines, if we could read them today.

While, however, the actual freedom or liberty of the children of God is not yet enjoyed by any, the inheritance of it being lost by Adam's fall, a few have regained their *title* to that inheritance. How did they do this? By faith in Christ, who, with his own precious blood, purchased it for all who will accept it as the free gift of God's grace. And these few have, by faith, already passed from death to life (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14) and are now, therefore, *reckoned* free -- free from sin, and its condemnation, death -- righteousness being imputed to them. Thus they hold a sure title to this glorious liberty, which all the sons of God will possess when fully restored to the mental and moral image of God.

A ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

As above indicated, the full liberty of the children of God is not yet ours, except by faith. However, while realizing this, let us not fail to note the measure of that liberty which is ours even now. It is very considerable. The liberty of the Christian is stated by the Apostle John to be the liberty, power or privilege, of becoming a son of God. "As many as received him [Jesus], to them gave he the power [liberty] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12.) That is to say, our Savior offers to all who accept him, and who desire to regain the mental and moral image of God, lost by Adam, and who desire to return to the relationship of children of God, a release from the sin which brought condemnation upon us all six thousand years ago; it means also that over such he will throw a robe of righteousness, which will cover all

their present imperfections and unavoidable weaknesses. Clothed thus, in this white raiment, they need not wait for the Millennial Age, but may at once go to God, by faith, and find immediate acceptance in his presence, and secure grace to help them in every time of need. Thus may they continue under this precious robe of righteousness throughout their earthly career until, having proved, by their obedience in the present life, the sincerity of their consecration to God's will and service, they shall ultimately be delivered from all the present weaknesses into grand, perfect, spiritual bodies, like unto their Lord's. This is the promise to the overcomers, who thus will be received into final and complete sonship as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior.

A remarkably clear and, we believe Scriptural, presentation of the meaning of the robe of righteousness, or "white raiment" as it applies to the believer's standing in the present life, is found in the writings of Brother Russell, under the caption:

"WHITE RAIMENT LOANED TO US"

"The Scriptures give us to understand that at the very beginning of our Christian experience we, figuratively, are clothed in white raiment. This white raiment represents justification -- we are justified freely from all things. It is a robe without spot. It is sometimes spoken of as: Christ's robe of righteousness because it comes to us through Christ. It is to be had only through him. He is able to impute to us, to loan to us, grant to us temporarily, this robe. It is spoken of as the wedding garment. At an oriental wedding, a wedding garment of white linen was used to cover over the clothing worn by each guest. It was loaned to the guest at the wedding by the host, when he appeared at the wedding feast. White linen signifies purity. So when Christ gives us the use of his merit, it is as a white garment to cover our imperfections. It is an imputation of his righteousness which is to us justification. We are exhorted to keep our garments unspotted from the world. The imputation of righteousness given us we are to preserve, to maintain. But we cannot fully maintain it of ourselves. Our tongues may sometimes say things that we wish they had not said, and our hands may sometimes do things we would not desire. Hence God has provided a way by which our blemishes or transgressions may be eradicated--those not willful. This way is our daily application for the cleansing of these unwilling transgressions through the precious blood. Thus we keep our garments unspotted from the world. Thus our justification, our white robe, is maintained -- should be maintained."

White raiment, however, is not only provided as a precious covering robe for the believer to wear during this present life. It is stated as the reward of the overcomer which he will realize in the future. "They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." - Rev. 3:4, 5.

The significance of this figure of the white robe in the sense of a reward to be granted the overcomer after he has successfully completed his trial and been faithful unto death, is also most clearly unfolded by Brother Russell in another article

"THE WHITE RAIMENT OF THE KINGDOM"

"It is not sufficient that we have the *imputation* of our Savior's righteousness. This imputation is only a temporary arrangement. We need to come to, the place where we shall have a righteousness of our own. Our flesh is imperfect. . . . In spite of our best endeavors, things are bound to go more or less wrong. But we are to prove ourselves overcomers--more than overcomers. The Lord has arranged that at the conclusion of our trial, at the end of the present life, all the overcomers shall receive the new body. This new body will be a body of actual purity.

Thus, as the Apostle says, we shall be 'clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' So our raiment will be changed from a garment of imputed perfection, our justification by faith, to that which represents actual perfection. At the resurrection we shall receive that body of inherent purity, without blemish, without spot, which is here pictured as 'white raiment.'"

What a wonderful Gospel it is, and how little do we need to be ashamed of it! And all this grace comes to us merely by believing in the name of Jesus, and all that that name implies. The name of Jesus signifies Savior or Liberator, as indicated in Matthew 1:21, which reads: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

But is it only to believers in his name that our Lord grants this privilege or liberty of becoming sons of God? Yes, we answer, only to these. Belief in no other person will do, nor will the acceptance of our Lord by any other name than the one which acknowledges his ransom-sacrifice avail. He must be recognized as Savior, not merely as Teacher or Guide. He saves his people from sins that are past, as well as teaches and guides them to abhor and avoid sins in the future.

It is worthy of notice, too, that this privilege of becoming sons of God was not extended to the overcomers of the past ages, nor will it be offered to such as prove faithful during the Millennial Age. These are represented in the Scriptures as receiving their life from the Christ (Head and Body). They will thus be not sons, but grandsons, if you please, of the Father. Though the race in general will not become sons of God, they may secure, through the sons of God, freedom from death, pain, etc. (Rom. 8:18-22.) The children of Christ--all who receive the redemption life, will stand as dear and as close to the Father, Jehovah, as sons, even as in the earthly family, the grandsons are as dearly loved, and as kindly treated. But none of them can be made perfect, without us, the sons and heirs, as the Apostle makes plain in Hebrews 11:40.

The manifestation of the sons of God is, therefore, the great event for which the whole race of mankind waits and hopes and groans, even though most of them do so in ignorance. Their hopes and expectations, not being clear, may be summed up as a vague longing for a Golden Age, a good time by and by.

Just now we said that the privilege of becoming sons of God is extended, in this Gospel Age, only to believers in Jesus as their Savior, their Liberator. Some one has put this thought in a heart searching question and presented it in a couple of verses which appeal very strongly. They read"

"It means so much to me, that, when he came,
They called him 'Jesus!' 'Tis a gripping name
That takes a saving hold on one like me,
Who lifts new-visioned eyes that now would see
All false lights fade in presence of the truen --
What does it mean to you?"

"It means so much to me, in crisis hours
When right seems baffled by opposing powers
To hear his strong voice call,
'Be of good cheer, For I have overcome this world of fear.
Here's refuge in my word -- my word is true! --
'What does it mean to you?"

Brethren, let us appreciate to the full Christ's offer of freedom-the glorious privilege he extends to us of becoming sons of God. Let us be strong, acquitting ourselves like men, receiving now by

faith the special favor to be brought to us at the appearing of our Lord Jesus, who will himself present us by his side before the Father, unblamable and unprovable in love.

- P. L. Read.

The Lord's House Over All

"It shall come to pass in the last days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." - Isaiah 2:2.

OUR text has not yet been fulfilled, but we believe the beginning of its fulfillment to be near. It pictures Messiah's Kingdom, for which Christian people have long been waiting and praying, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as in Heaven'."-the same Kingdom for which the Jews so long waited and are still waiting. Our text relates, not to the spiritual part of the Kingdom, but to that which belongs to the natural seed of Abraham. A great mistake has been made by many of us in the past, in that we have not discerned and acknowledged the two Israels, Spiritual and Natural, and the separate rewards and blessings apportioned to these by the Divine promises of the Scriptures. Both are to be used of. God in fulfilling the promise made to Abraham -- in blessing all the families of the earth.

Only a "little flock" is to be selected during this Gospel Age and tried, fitted and polished and eventually changed from -human to spirit nature, "like unto the angels." These with their Lord and Head, will constitute the great Mediator of the New Covenant, under which all the families of the earth will be blessed. After the completion- of Messiah, Head and Members, on the plane of glory, the New Covenant' will be inaugurated with Israel, as the Scriptures distinctly teach (Jer. 31:31-34). Our text, therefore, waits for its accomplishment until the last member of the elect Church of Christ shall have passed beyond the veil.

ISRAEL THE EARTHLY REPRESENTATIVE

In the symbolic language of the Scriptures a mountain always symbolizes a Kingdom.' Hence the Mountain of the Lord's House means the Kingdom of God, and that Royal House or Family recognized by him. For instance, we read that David sat upon the throne of the Kingdom of the- Lord, and that God made a Covenant with him, "even the sure mercies of David," viz., that none but his seed, his posterity, would ever be recognized as the Divinely appointed representatives of God in kingly authority and power. In other words, Messiah was to be the offspring of David, the great antitypical David (Beloved) who must "reign from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth." Under this power or rule Israel will be exalted amongst the nations and used as the Divine channel of blessing for all people, that eventually all the families of the earth may come to the true knowledge of God and to a full opportunity of becoming children of Abraham by faith and obedience.

The Messiah-King on the spirit plane, the Son of God (and like God invisible to men, as are also the angels) -- is the antitypical David and the antitypical Solomon, the wise, the great, the rich. In the days of His flesh he was the Son of David according to the flesh, though begotten of a Divine life not tainted by any human imperfection. He was, therefore, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. His faithfulness to the will of the Father made him subject to all the experiences of a life of suffering and death, as expressed in his own words, "The cup which my, Father hath poured for me, shall I refuse to drink it?" His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, demonstrated his loyalty to the last degree and he received the high reward apportioned. "Him hath God also highly exalted and given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow both of things in Heaven and things in earth."

Exalted to the right hand of Divine favor- he waits only for the Father's time to take to himself his great power and reign (Rev. 11:17). Meantime, in harmony with the Divine will, purposed before the foundation of the world, he acts as Advocate for such as have the hearing ear and the obedient heart, and will now respond to the special invitation of the Gospel Age. That call is to leave the world, its sins, its pleasures and its hopes, and to walk by faith in the exceeding great and precious promises" of God -- the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man. These are the Heavenly things promised them as the Bride and Jointheir with their Redeemer in his glorious Kingdom to come and its blessed work of uplifting Israel and the world.

IN THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS

We have before our minds the antitypical House of David, Messiah's kingly household, the Royal Priesthood, Divinely prepared. As a Kingdom it will be at the top -- above all the kingdoms of earth. Not only will this be true of the spiritual Kingdom (invisible to men as the angels are invisible), but it will include also an earthly Kingdom composed of "Israelites indeed." At their head as princes in all the earth will stand the resurrected Ancient Worthies, perfected as men and samples of what all mankind, by obedience to the laws of the Kingdom, may attain to with eternal life. Those Ancient Worthies are enumerated in the Scriptures -- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Prophets, etc., and described by St. Paul in Hebrews 11:38-40.

To these belong the earthly promises of the Old Testament. They never heard of the Heavenly or spiritual promises. Their loyalty will find its reward in the fact that they will come forth from the tomb no longer blemished and imperfect, but fully, completely restored to the perfection originally enjoyed by Father Adam. Additionally, these will have the special guidance and instruction of Messiah (Head and members) in all the affairs of mankind. Thus as the Master said, speaking of that time, "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Prophets in the Kingdom" (Luke 13:28). The world will have contact with them and will be blessed by their instruction. But the world will never see Messiah, except as they will see his mind, his disposition, his character, through these, his earthly representatives in the Kingdom. He fully meant it when he declared before he died, "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more. But ye shall see me" (John 14:19). The Apostle assures us that we shall see Him as he is, because we shall be like him. The Church will experience the First Resurrection change from earthly to Heavenly nature (1 Cor. 15:50; 1 John 3:1, 2).

ALL NATIONS FLOW UNTO IT

God's Kingdom will be represented in the earth by Israel -- especially by these saintly, men of Israel, resurrected perfect, who will be the special appointees and representatives of the glorified Messiah's Rule. As it is written, "Instead of thy fathers [the ancient saintly ones were styled 'the fathers,' as Jesus was styled the Son of Abraham and David] shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth" (Ps. 45:16). These princes, acting under and continually in contact with the spiritual Kingdom and rulers styled in the Scriptures "the Royal Priesthood" will, of course, be so superior in their wisdom and power as to command the obedience of the whole earth. The nation of Israel, with whom they are related, would naturally respond more quickly than others to the new order of things, which is just that for which they have been waiting and praying for more than thirty centuries.

In these words the Lord through the Prophet assures us of the wonderful success which will attend the establishment of the New Empire of earth, the dominion of the Prince of Light, which supersedes the dominion of the Prince of Darkness, when Satan shall be bound for a thousand years, that he may

deceive the peoples no more. Messiah's Kingdom will be high above all other Kingdoms, not only in its grandeur, majesty and authority, but also in the lofty principles which it will represent. Thus it is written, "He shall lay righteousness to the line and justice to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies" (Isa. 28:17). Nevertheless, as the world shall come to appreciate the new order of things all nations shall flow unto it, *flow up* to it -- contrary to the downwardness of fallen human nature. It will make manifest such wonderful rewards for righteousness and obedience to God, and it will so make manifest the stripes that must attend all willful disobedience to the Divine arrangement, that the Scripture will be fulfilled which declares that "when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9).

For six thousand years humanity has been learning "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," its downward tendency in every sense of the word. Every form of government has been tried in an endeavor to secure the greatest amount of blessing. But the uniform results have been that those exalted to place and influence and power have proved themselves unequal to the opportunities and temptations of the positions and have abused them selfishly. Whoever is acquainted with history realizes the truthfulness of all this. If some of us have hoped that the general education of the masses and the general enlightenment of the race would abolish sin and selfishness and demonstrate the truthfulness of the proverb, "Honesty is the best policy," we are willing to confess that this has been a mistake. We perceive that the greater the wisdom and intelligence granted to a selfish mind and heart the greater will be its opportunities for evil.

As a consequence the world is losing confidence in itself. All, whether politicians or judges or governors, great or small, of one party or another, of one nationality or another- all are accused of being "tared with the same stick" of selfishness. The Bible clearly indicates that this distrust is not without reason and that the great Time of Trouble now upon every nation (Dan. 12:1) is the direct result of this loss of confidence. The Bible description of the matter briefly summed up is that every man's' hand shall be against his neighbor (Zech. 8:10; 14:13). It will be after this great Time of Trouble shall have thoroughly sickened humanity as respects itself and any hopes it might have had of bringing about a Millennium by its own efforts-that God will manifest his Kingdom in the top of the mountains - higher than all other kingdoms every way, and all people shall flow toward it. As it is written, "The desire of all nations shall come" (Hag. 2:7).

This is described in the verses following our text which reads, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the Mountain [Kingdom] of the Lord, to the House [Temple] of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion [the spiritual, unseen Kingdom of Messiah] shall go forth the Law and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem [the seat of earth's empire to be]. And he shall judge among the nations [rewarding and punishing justly], and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

All Christians agree that these words apply to the Messiah's Kingdom. They tell us clearly and distinctly of how the judgments of the Lord will be abroad in the earth, causing wars to cease and the knowledge of the Lord to fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep (Isa. 11:9). Notwithstanding, therefore, the picture of the intervening trouble, which Divine Wisdom sees necessary for the humbling of human pride let us rejoice in the glorious arrangement God has made on mankind's behalf. And let the Church of Christ specially rejoice in the favored position offered to her in connection with the world's salvation - a seat with the Redeemer in his glorious spiritual Throne and share with him in the great work of blessing Natural Israel and all the families of the earth.

O HOUSE OF JACOB, COME!

We have already noted that this prophecy belongs to Natural Israel and not to Spiritual Israel. As the first verse declares, it concerns Judah and Jerusalem. By the time this prophecy will have begun to be fulfilled, Spiritual Israel will be beyond the veil. It is in full harmony with this that we read in the fifth verse, " O House of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord! This is particularly the time when this message to Natural Israel should go forth. We understand the Scripture to teach that during the next few years the Lord will have special dealings with Israel in connection with this call. He will point out to them the way of righteousness and the great privileges that are theirs as a people, because of Divine promises to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc. But only those who respond by turning to the light of God's Word to walk in it will be in the proper condition of heart and obedience to promptly get the blessing at the beginning of Messiah's Reign. Those most prompt to respond will get the greater blessing.

Verses 6-10 portray some of the reasons why God's favor has been withdrawn for a time from Natural Israel -- aside from the fact that his special favor was for the time to be given to Spiritual Israel. Then follows a description of the Time of Trouble, in which present institutions will succumb, to be followed by Messiah's Empire. Let us read some of these verses and note their applicability to our day and the correspondence between these statements and very similar pronouncements in the Book of Revelation, applicable also to the time in which we are living. We will quote and paraphrase.

WHAT THE TROUBLE WILL ACCOMPLISH

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day. One of the greatest obstacles in the pathway of humanity, hindering approach to truth and righteousness, is pride. The Almighty God is not sufficiently revered. The very learned men of all our colleges seem more and more to doubt that there is a God and that the affairs of earth are subject to any other regulations than those of chance, except as the learned can regulate them. The Time of Trouble, when the various theories of man will be tried and found wanting, will demonstrate most thoroughly that the wisdom from Above is neglected in favor of earthly wisdom. The Lord says in another place, "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish and the understanding of their prudent men shall disappear." This will go from bad to worse; and all the Wisdom of the learned and the methods to which they have trusted will prove futile. The result will be the glory of the Lord and the humbling of human pride.

For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be heavy upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low, and upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up (the ecclesiastically great) and upon all the oaks of Bashan (the politically strong); upon all the high mountains (the kingdoms of the world) and upon all the hills that are lifted up (the smaller principedoms); and upon every high tower and upon every fenced wall (representing human organization for strength and protection) and upon all desirable prospects and ideals of earthly ambition, the arm of the Lord will be heavy. The result will be that the loftiness shall be bowed and the haughtiness shall be made low and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day; and the idols shall be utterly abolished (Isa. 2:12-18). God must be first under the new order of things. No peace or blessing will otherwise result.

HIDING IN ROCKS AND CAVES

Those in distress and perplexity will in this Time of Trouble flee to the holes and the rocks and the caves of earth in fear. As Revelation (Rev. 6:16) expresses it, They shall call to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the Throne." We are not to understand this more literally than its context. It does not signify that people will be so foolish as to literally pray for rocks to fall upon them, when they could more easily destroy their lives in another way. The thought is the very contrary of this - that they desire protection, shielding, hiding, covering from the trouble of the coming Day of the Lord. These shelters of the rocks and caves of the earth symbolically represent the attempted protection of human organizations, insurance companies, secret societies, etc. But none of these will be able to protect from the trouble which is coming and which will be worldwide, involving every earthly thing and interest, religious and secular, financial and political.

This will take place when the glory of the Lord and his majesty are manifested in connection with his standing up to assume command of the world and when he will shake terribly the earth (society), that everything contrary to righteousness and holiness may be uprooted and overthrown. St. Paul pictures this same Time of Trouble and declares that the only thing that will not be shaken will be whatever is in harmony with God's Kingdom of righteousness (Heb. 12: 26-29).

Though round about Him clouds and darkness
Obscure the beams of dawning day,
Above the clouds, upon the mountains,
The Watchers see the morning ray.

- *C. T. Russell*

Things Prepared

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." - 1 Corinthians 2:9

IT WOULD seem a hopeless task that we have set for ourselves -- to get a vision of the things that have never been seen or even heard about, the things that we would not understand if we did hear about them or see them. The following verse, however, gives us courage, for it assures us, "God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit." Or is it God's wisdom, verse 7, that is revealed to us, as the margin of the *American Revision* indicates may be the meaning. "Unto us God revealed *it* by his spirit." Not to man is the revelation made, but unto the "new creature in Christ Jesus." Paul's use of this very text, for some of us, illustrates how impossible it is for man unaided to grasp the things of the spirit, for they understand he is quoting Isaiah 64:4. No human mind would have gleaned from it such a thought. The verse reads: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." Without the guidance of the spirit, its inspiration would have been eternally lost.

Perhaps there is no better method of deciding the nature of the things prepared for us than to review for a few moments the things that have come into our lives since we consecrated our all to the Lord. If the first thought is, "Oh, if I had dreamed how great the trials would be through which I was to pass, I am sure I would never have had the courage to make a consecration," perhaps the flesh is not quite dead yet. If the fleshly mind were completely gotten rid of, would not the first thought be of the blessings that have come out of those trials? After being stoned at Lystra, and left for dead, Paul departed for a time to Derbe, but returned with the message for the brethren at Lystra: "Through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God." A fleshly mind would have brooded over the intensity of his sufferings and the injustice of the treatment he had received, until there would be little else of which he could talk.

At no time does inspiration hint of our arriving at the condition where unpleasant experiences will of themselves become enjoyable. Instead we are assured that "Discipline always seems for the time to be a thing of pain, not of joy; but those who are *trained by* it reap the fruit of it afterwards" (Heb. 12:11, *Moffatt*). It is impossible for one who does not fully appreciate *the kind of fruit* thus developed, to accept the Apostle's advice and "rejoice *in* tribulation." But after a few experiences with tribulation, *properly profited by*, one can by faith accept each new one as further evidence of the Father's love. To complain is to say, "I wish he did not love me so." To rejoice is to acknowledge our needs and the wisdom of his dealings. The after-fruitage the trials yield is too precious to forego just to save the flesh a little discomfort.

Instead of murmuring because of our testings, we should rather be concerned that we who have so much to be corrected should have so little evidence of corrective providences. "Suffering produces fortitude; fortitude, ripeness of character; and ripeness of character, hope; and . . . this hope never disappoints because God's love for us floods our hearts through the holy spirit that has been given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5, *Weymouth and Young's Literal Translation*). No wonder Paul begins this passage, "We *exult* in our sufferings." The Arnold-Ford Commentary testifies on the basis of Paul's statement: "We not only rejoice in hope of future good, but we also rejoice or make our boast in present troubles; not merely *in the midst* of them, and *in spite* of them, but *actually in* them, or *on account* of them, as the context implies; and this is in accordance both with Scripture precept and with recorded Christian experience."

BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH OUR FATHER

The following well illustrates the Christian's growth in the supreme kind of knowledge. A lad is taking his first walk with his father. Since they lived on the edge of a village, their stroll led into the nearby pastures. They soon came to a little stream, a mere trickle, but an insurmountable obstacle to the young mind that had never seen such a thing before. Without the father's hand that grasped his, he would never have attempted it. But what a thrill it was to find himself safely on the other side. Soon they came to one two feet wide. Surely no one could get over that! But how easily his wonderful father lifted him over it. The next one, four feet wide-well of course even his father could not get over that, he thought. But he found himself clasped to his father's breast, and with one jump they were safely on the other side-and he was beginning to understand what a wonderful father he had. Finally they came to one twice as wide.. No father in all this world could pass over that big thing, he thought. But even here the father had a way that fitted the need. He took the little fellow on his back and had him clasp his arms about his neck, and then, leaping from stone to stone, soon set the little one down on the other side, to look up into his face with the assurance that there was not another father in all this world like his. He could not have found that out if there had been no rivers to cross. So also in the Christian life. Though one by one our experiences have become more severe, with each, our comprehension of the Father's love and wisdom and power has grown. Who could regret the experience that teaches so much?

Those walking the way of consecration find it so narrow that the only safety is in keeping in the middle; and for each traveler there is just room enough for "My Lord and I." When we entered on this journey, we were weak in faith, and it was hard to realize always the presence of this unseen Traveler. Graciously, therefore, the Lord provided the comfort of brethren to walk with us, some ahead and some behind; but brethren we could see; not brethren to lean upon, however. Our Lord is by our side for that purpose.

Those who walk this way do not always find it easy to get along amicably with their companions; in fact could, and often do, make suggestions of more stringent limitations to the One who "hath set the members in the Body as it hath pleased him." How long-suffering he is that he permits our meddling in things that are strictly in his own power. There is a duty devolving on every member of the Body. It is not that of choosing who shall walk with him, but instead, that of accepting all whom the Lord invites to that privilege. Then, having graciously accepted them, "let us consider one another to provoke," not by arguments on our differences, but "to love and good works. In spite of all our best efforts, we find some of them hard to get along with peaceably; but, the Apostle continues, leaving no opening for the flesh: "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." The verse that follows makes one's heart ache for those who invent excuses for limiting their fellowships -it is a warning of the second death, and evidently for those who perpetrate this very crime against the One who planned that fellowship (Heb. 10:24-27).

ARE WE IN DANGER OF STILL ANOTHER SIN OF PRESUMPTION?

With our hand placed confidently in that of our faithful Father, life can include a long series of conquests, many rivers successfully crossed. But may not this lead to overconfidence, to the attempting of some river too big for us? Fortunately we have an inspired answer to that, telling us exactly how big that last river may safely be. "Strengthened with *all* might," is the assurance of Colossians 1:11. Brother Paul, do you mean all there is in the world? He knew we would have difficulty in accepting a promise so sweeping as this one, so he continues -- to make the matter absolutely clear: "Strengthened with all might, *according to his glorious power*"; literally, "the power of his glory." Is not that the purpose of all the experiences of the Christian life, in part at

least, that we may begin to comprehend how glorious he is and that that knowledge may become a sustaining power, a never-failing inspiration in our lives? The answer then is that when we come to that biggest river, that hardest experience, we need to ask ourselves only, "Could my heavenly Father cross that?" If he can, strengthened, with all might according to his glorious power (according to the power of his glory), we are safe to press on; and it will be to victory if we look to him instead of at the waters crossed.

As one wonders if he might be risking too much on the assurance of just one' text, not one, but many texts come to mind: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" and such like (Deut. 33:25; Ps. 27:1). There are many weak and trembling travelers of the narrow way, since "not many mighty" have been called, and we hear these say: "Those promises will work for those who are not as weak as I am." For all these our thoughtful heavenly Father has provided assurance suitable only for those who have discovered that they are weak and who are humble enough to "lean not to their own understanding"; "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength comes to perfection where there is weakness" (2 Cor. 19:9, *Berkeley Version*). Could one believe this truly and not have peace? - "the peace of God"? The Greek language, like others, except our own, has no apostrophe "s" (s), so its possessive is expressed by the preposition "of." The Moffatt translation is therefore justified in its rendering of this verse. Those who have the faith to accept it must confess, "God has revealed it unto us by his spirit." Only those who have experienced this peace can testify as to the quality of the peace he gives. Moffatt reads: "Never be anxious, but always make your requests known to God in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; so shall *God's peace*, that surpasses all our dreams [lit. thought], keep guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7).

Our precious Redeemer, in leaving his disciples, knew how; great would be the dangers besetting the Christian, how the weakness of the flesh would make it the easy victim of Satan's attacks if the heart were not garrisoned by his peace. Included in his parting gift, therefore, was this gem: "Peace I leave with you." But could he leave it? Might not that intimate they already had it? They could answer, "Yes, we have peace. Food and clothing, even taxes have been provided, and our Teacher has been able to answer every argument the opposers have raised. Remember the 5,000 fed, the fish with the coin in its mouth, the doctors of the law confused in our Master's presence. Who would not have peace under such care? But this does not complete the Master's promise: "Peace I leave with you; *my peace I give unto you*. Was the Lord making a mistake giving peace to those who already had it? No, it is not the peace of having something to eat and wear, of having taxes paid. It is *his* peace, the peace of sonship, the peace they were soon to experience for the first time. Until begotten to sonship they could not know "God's peace." This peace is the heritage of those "begotten again to a living hope, . . . to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3-5, *Young's Literal Translation*).

No man of the world can be rich enough not to prefer such treasures to his own -if he could but have the faith to believe the promise. This is not the only thing that is already ours. All things are ours. No wonder the Apostle instructs us not to "glory in men," since all things are ours. Croesus nor Midas, nor anyone else, nor all combined could add anything to our wealth. They might add to our tribulation, might even take from us our peace, but they would have nothing to add to our blessedness. Nor would the heart of faith have even a faint desire for them to attempt it; for, already, "all things are ours" by faith.

THE MOST REMARKABLE OF ALL INHERITANCES

But we have not waited to hear the Apostle to the end of his statement of our wealth. Continuing, he names some of these things: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." "Cephas"! that is one of Peter's names. This means that Paul and Peter are both ours, not to be apportioned one here and one there, one to the Jews and one to the Gentiles - both are ours whether we be Jew or Gentile. No one can take them from us. We are very thankful for that because of the valuable truths each has taught us. But why is Apollos in the list? He made some mistakes in doctrine; and, he did not write a word to leave for us to study. Ah, he was a member of the Body of Christ, necessary, therefore, that it might be "harmoniously fitted together and closely united by every contributing ligament, with proportionate power for *each single part* to effect the development of the Body for its upbuilding in love" (Eph. 4:16, *Berkeley Version*). Perhaps, too, he is included so that we will remember that every saint down through the Age that we can contact may lend us some assistance in our supreme *need-more of the-spirit of the Lord*. These saints of the dark ages perhaps cannot help us in doctrines, but they and Apollos were "in Christ Jesus," and so they partook of his spirit and thus can function for us in "the development of the Body for its upbuilding in love." To forget what is the real purpose of the Christian life -- development into Christ's likeness - is to risk the loss of the precious heritage of their saintly lives.

Not yet have we heard Paul's list to the end. The next in the list is "the world"-the "kosmos," this present evil order of things, with its corrupt governments, deceitful advertising of grasping, unscrupulous organizations. Do we desire that thing in our list? Perhaps we would never find a place in the completed Body if we did not learn patience with unrighteousness in high places, learn not to "speak evil" of dignitaries. Could the Lord have provided anything that would have furnished a more searching test of our faith than this, that these were "ordained of God," and that it is his will that we should be in subjection to the powers that be (Rom. 13:1; Titus 3: 1) ? Not this world alone, but the world to come is also ours, for the next thing in the list is "life." Except as sin shall again bring its wages upon one, that life is eternal.

Brother Paul, we cannot ask for more; we could not have dreamed that this much could be ours. But, "wait a minute," our brother says, "I have one more thing for you. All things are yours, God-given teachers, the world, and life-and *death*." "What! that horrible thing! Why, Paul, we do not want that. Give that to our enemies." "Oh, you do not understand," he says. "I have put that in as the very climax of your blessings. If *faithful unto death* you will receive the *crown of life*-the very highest form of life the Father has to give. If you are dead with our Lord, you will reign with him, crowned for the most glorious of kingships, that reigning of righteousness that will teach righteousness, obedience to all the willing, and thus give life to all that under your guidance go to the very end of the highway of holiness. To leave death out of your list would be to leave out joint-heirship, would be to fail of being of the Seed of Abraham for the blessing of all the families of the earth." "Ye, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise." But he was only a type, and not in every detail, for there will be no angel hand to stay the knife if we go as willingly as he to the altar of sacrifice. How much easier, however, the Lord has made it for us, in that we "die daily." For many this is the precious daily privilege of serving the brethren, laying down their lives for those that are nearest and dearest to them, new creatures in Christ Jesus. Truly, "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

- P. E. Thomson

Mirrors

"We thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever: we will skew forth thy praise to all generations." - Psalm 79:13.

WE ALL know what mirrors are, for we use them every day to reflect our image. But how many of us realize to what extent we ourselves are mirrors, receiving and reflecting either God's glory or the negative of that glory.

The Psalm from which the above verse is quoted is mostly a lament over the condition; of natural Israel in subjection to her foes, and a prayer of supplication by its author that God would glorify his own name in bringing about a deliverance, and punishment upon those who defied him in their treatment of Israel. If this prayer is answered, the promise is given that they, the people of God, will render due thanks and show forth God's praise forever. This Psalm had its direct application to natural Israel, but antitypically no doubt to spiritual Israel. "We will *show forth* Thy praise to all generations," or in other words, the Psalmist here declares that God's people will mirror his glory.

THE MAJESTY ON HIGH

Apparently there was a time when God was alone. Such a state is beyond our comprehension, but we must come to this conclusion if we accept the Bible statement that Jesus in his prehuman state was "the beginning of the creation of God."

If there was a beginning to creation and if Jesus was that beginning, instead of being a third part of a Trinity as some say, then God must have been alone -- nothing but God -- no opportunity or possibility for the exercise of his attributes of wisdom, justice, love, and power--nothing but himself -- nothing to reflect his glory. How wholly inadequate our minds are to grasp or fathom God and eternity!

Certain philosophers claim that what we call time came into existence with the creation of the material universe, and that the past, present, and future are all in the present with God. All that has occurred in the past and all that will occur in the future is before him now. The findings of science and certain Scriptures seem to support this view. For example, Acts 15:18 declares, that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the, world." In Romans 4:17 it is written: "*I have made* thee [Abraham] a father of many nations, like unto him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and *calleth those things which be not as though they were.*" At the time this statement was made to Abraham, as we view things, he was not the father of many nations, but in God's sight the thing was accomplished.

An illustration that has been given to show how things past and future to us, are in the present with God, is that of two men, one walking along a country road, and the other flying high overhead. To the man walking along the road the farm-house a mile back and the stream and foot-bridge just beyond the next hill are things of the past and future in his sight and experience, but to the man high overhead they are open to view and are in the present. This is a crude illustration, but gives some idea of how things or events which are in the past and future so far as our experience goes may stand revealed in the sight of God.

THE AORIST TENSE

In this connection it is of interest to note the use of the aorist tense in the New Testament Greek. Scholars tell us that this tense has no equivalent in the English language for it seems to combine past, present, future, and perfect.

The translator of the Interlinear New Testament says: "This tense [aorist] of the Greek verb has been at all times the most difficult to deal with, being translated in the Authorized Version (and by others) sometimes by the present, sometimes by the past, sometimes by the future, and sometimes by the perfect. Grammarians say that in the main, 'it is the indefinite past.' For example: to say, 'He has cleansed me,' is more than saying, 'He cleansed me,' because the first expression implies a continuance of the act or its effect to the present time; whereas the latter expression speaks of an act at some time in the past, without anything being implied as to its continuance."

In 2 Tim. 2:19 we read (Authorized Version) "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The verb "knoweth" is from the Greek aorist. In this case the English tense is a fairly good rendition. The Lord knoweth those- that are his, whether in the past, present, or future.

The verbs in John 3:16 are also in the aorist tense. Our common version reads: "God so loved [past tense] the world that he gave [past tense] his only begotten Son." The Newberry and Concordant Versions, translate the text: "God so loves the world that he gives his only begotten Son." It is hard to give the correct thought in English for the aorist tense in which the original Greek is couched includes past, present, and future.

It is somewhat like the name God gave to Moses in answer to, his inquiry as to- what he should tell the children of Israel when they asked who said they were to do certain things. God said to Moses: "I am that I am." The name suggests eternity.

GOD'S GLORY REFLECTED IN CREATION

Isaiah 43:7 tells us that all things were created for God's own glory. All things were intended to mirror the glory of God in some way pleasing to God. Think what that glory must be that requires all of creation to reflect it! Think of the wisdom and power revealed in creation -- no two things exactly alike -- each grain of sand, each atom and ion in that grain, reflecting in some degree and some special sense all its own, the glory of God! As the Psalmist declares, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

"HE THAT HATH SEEN ME HATH SEEN THE FATHER"

The first creation to manifest God's glory was the Logos. John's Gospel, first verse, says: "In a beginning was the Logos [Word] and the Logos was with the God, and a God was the Logos. The same was in a beginning with the God." This translation harmonizes with the statement of Rev. 3:14 which calls Jesus the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

John 1:3 continues by saying: "All things were made by him [the Logos] and without him was not anything made that was made." This agrees with the statement of Paul who said "All things are of the Father, but by [or through] the Son."

The Son of God, called the Logos in his pre-human state, manifests God more fully than any other creation. To begin with, he was the only direct creation of the Father; all the rest were of the Father but by him. In Proverbs, eighth chapter, he is described as- the personification of wisdom. He is recorded as saying: "Jehovah formed me in the beginning of his way, before [or the first of] his works of old. Then was I by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

The Son was always God's right-hand and honored agent; and after his resurrection and exaltation to the divine nature he is described as being the express or exact image of the Father's person -- the most complete mirror of God's glory.

FAILING TO REFLECT GOD'S GLORY WE FAIL IN THE PURPOSE OF OUR CREATION

All things having been designed to reflect God's glory, even the lowest forms of creation must ultimately fulfill that purpose. In Rev. 4:11 we read: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power! for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Here we note the object or reason for all things, namely, for God's pleasure, to reflect his glory; and when persons or things cease to reflect that glory, they no longer fulfill the object of their creation, and will be destroyed.

Adam, created in the image and likeness of God, was capable of reflecting God's glory more fully than any other earthly creation; but when he disobeyed God, sin and the resultant corruption began to tarnish the perfect mirror so that it no longer gave a true or perfect reflection.

God foreknew what would occur before he created Adam, nevertheless he went ahead with man's creation because he knew he could cause the treachery of Satan, the wrath of men, and the experience with evil to work out to his own glory and honor, and to the eternal welfare of all his intelligent creation. In the meantime these human mirrors have become greatly tarnished, and some almost, if not wholly, worthless. As a whole they were cast off, but here and there God has found certain ones who have been willing to undergo a washing and polishing process in order that they might be used of him.

"THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD"

In the tabernacle type God drew a picture of the plan he would follow in restoring mankind to a perfect condition; and in making the laver, where the priests washed before entering the tabernacle, he used the burnished copper looking-glasses or mirrors of the women. (Exod. 38:8.) This seems to picture the washing of water by the Word, for Paul speaks of the word as a mirror and a cleansing agent for those who use it. The priests using the laver could no doubt see the heavens reflected therein as well as their own faces. Is it not the same when we look into God's Word? Does it not reflect God's glory of character as truly as it reveals our own imperfections?

In 2 Cor. 3:18 Paul says: "We all with open face beholding as in a glass." (Strong says this word "beholding" means "to mirror oneself, see reflected.") "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."

It is the writer's belief that Rotherham and Weymouth each give a better translation of this verse. Weymouth translates: "And all of us with unveiled faces, reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness." Rotherham reads: "And we all with unveiled face receiving and reflecting the glory of the Lord, into the same image are being transformed."

These translations do not stress the point of God's Word being a mirror, as does the Authorized Version, but rather the fact that we, with unveiled faces, because the veil of darkness that had clouded our minds has been removed, reflect more and more the glory of God we see revealed in his Word.

EXCEEDING JOY TO BE OURS WHEN WE REFLECT PERFECTLY

Jesus was a perfect manifestation of God in the flesh, and if we bear fruit, as is intended of us, then we manifest God also -- at the present time, it is true, through imperfect, tarnished reflectors, but in the resurrection the medium of reflection will be perfect.

Paul makes this plain in 1 Cor. 13:12, where he says: "For now we see through a glass dimly." A footnote in the Diaglott states that in olden times they did not have clear glass but had to *use* substances such as horn, oiled parchment, etc., in their windows. These admitted the light, but revealed objects very dimly. We are like that. This earthly body through which we receive and reflect is very tarnished, so we see and know but in part, and so reflect imperfectly. But then, when we are resurrected, with perfect spirit bodies, we will see and know face to face. Our medium for reflecting will not only be perfect, but will be of super-spirit quality, the Divine nature.

What a delight, what a joy it will be, when we can glorify God perfectly! At the present time our efforts are a mixture of joy and chagrin because we reflect so imperfectly. It is human nature to enjoy most those things we do well, and to neglect the things we find difficult. All creatures are happy in doing the things they are fitted to do. Fortunately our new minds dwell on a plane that delights to do the will of God, and so we find pleasure in reflecting his glory even though our mirrors are tarnished. It makes us happy when we realize that we have *in* some small way conducted ourselves in a manner pleasing unto God; and if this makes us happy, what will be our reaction when we can perfectly reflect that glory? That will be exceeding joy, the Apostle tells us.

In nearly every place where this phrase "exceeding joy" is used, it is connected with the completed work of transformation in our mirrors or characters. Jude says, verse 24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you *faultless* before the presence of his glory with *exceeding joy*, to the only wise God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever." In being made faultless (no tarnish or flaw in our mirror) we must pass through trials and testings; and if we could not by faith look ahead to the finished work, we might become discouraged and quit. But Peter says: (1 Pet. 4:12, 13) "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with *exceeding joy*." Here again, we see the "exceeding joy" linked with the completed work of transformation. Paul, also, links the two in 2 Cor. 4:14-18: "He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise us up by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not. But though outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"IF ANY MAN DRAW BACK"

If any man draw back from this process of being made meet for the inheritance in glory, God's Word tells us that he will have no pleasure in that man, but will cut him off from life; for nothing will be permitted to exist that does not in its own station, perfectly fulfill its Creator's will.

James says (James 1:23-25) "If any one be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he resembles a man viewing his natural face in a mirror; for he viewed himself and went away, and immediately forgot what kind of person he was. But he who looks intently into that which is the perfect law of freedom and continues in it, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of its work, this man will be blessed in his deed." His contemplation of the perfect character reflected in the perfect law of freedom has a transforming effect upon his own character.

The Scriptures indicate that God has had the new creation in mind from the beginning of his work; he did not, however, see fit to create it outright as he did the various orders of angels and mankind, but has proceeded in the strange and mysterious manner of taking imperfect human beings, the lowest order of beings formed in his image, and is making them over into the image of his Son. The Son, we are told, is the express image of God, having life in himself, even as the Father hath life in himself. This whole matter has been a mystery all down through the ages, and is still a mystery to all except the little flock, the ones who are being transformed.

THE CREATION OF THE NEW CREATION

No other creation has known anything about its own creation before it began to function as a completed being reflecting in some degree God's glory. But the new creation, including its Head, is made fully aware of what is happening unto it; and what is still more strange, is invited, yea, even expected, to cooperate to the extent of its ability in bringing about its own perfection, and any who will not cooperate are cast aside as unfit.

Nothing like this has ever occurred before, nor, as far as we know, will ever occur again. God has followed this course, we understand, because of the very exalted position this class will occupy when completed. These are free moral agents; it is left to their own volition as to whether they

will be made to reflect God's glory or not. God will not need to test this new creation after it has been perfected, as he has tested all other free moral agents; because this class has been fully tested in the process of making it meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, where it will be crowned with immortality.

"IF I IN THY LIKENESS, O LORD, MAY AWAKE"

It is believed by many that once God *has* given any one the divine nature even he himself could not destroy that one. Whether this be true or not, the course God has followed in his development of this class has obviated such a contingency, because the ones that are given the divine nature will have proved beyond all possibility of doubt that they will forever remain loyal to God and his will.

We now have the opportunity of demonstrating our loyalty to God and the principles of righteousness, and should rejoice in any test he sees fit to bring upon us. "Count it all joy," says the Apostle (James 1:2-4), "when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience; but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

It rests with us whether we will let God work in us both to will and to do his good pleasure. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2.) It rests with us whether we will "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God in order that he may exalt us in due time."

In the 44th chapter of Isaiah we read: "Behold I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth, shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. . . . I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." They shall mirror or reflect my glory.

"Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth [mirror] all his praise? We thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever; we will show forth [mirror] thy praise to all generations."

- J. T. Read.

The Question Box

Question:

Please explain Matthew 24:28, which reads: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Answer:

I shall never forget, at the age of seventeen, asking this selfsame question of a dear sister then in her eighties. Nor shall I ever forget her reply. While to most of my queries she had a ready response, this one puzzled her. She did not permit this lack of knowledge, however, to disturb her poise. With quiet dignity, humbly, and with her customary charm and serenity, she replied simply: "My boy, I really do not know what that scripture means."

Many years have rolled away since then. She, I doubt not, has long known the answer to this puzzling passage. For myself, I am not too certain. Perhaps I have it also. That, however, must be for the reader to decide.

Before inquiring as to the meaning of the expression, let us first secure a better translation.

To begin with, the first word of the verse, the particle "for" should be eliminated. It *has* been eliminated in the *Revised Standard Version*, the *Diaglott*, and other more accurate translations. Scholars tell us that an earlier translator foisted this word "for" into the text because he imagined, erroneously, that the statement in verse 28 was intended to corroborate the statement in verse 27, where our Lord had likened his second advent to lightning emerging from the east and shining to the west.

Again, the word translated "eagles" includes all birds of rapine, and since *eagles do not feed on carrion*, the word vultures should be used here. A preferred translation is given by *Moffatt*: "Wherever the carcass lies, there will the vultures gather."

Now that we have this preferred translation before us, let us examine it. No less than five possible interpretations have come to my attention.

One interpretation is that the Jewish nation is represented by the carcass, while the eagles are the Roman armies, whose ensign is the eagle. Many able scholars have adopted this view, among them being Lightfoot, John Wesley, and Adam Clark. But this interpretation proceeds on the assumption that verse 27 refers to our Lord's return to destroy Jerusalem through the agency of the Romans in A.D. 70 -- an assumption which is not confirmed by historical facts, and which introduces confusion into the interpretation of the rest of the chapter.

A second interpretation, one adopted by Chrysostom and others of the early Christian Fathers, is that the carcass represents Christ himself, and the eagles represent the members of the Church, gathering to him by faith throughout the Gospel Age

A third interpretation is somewhat similar to the second one, except that the gathering together of the eagles is understood to mean the meeting with the Lord in the air, mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

A fourth interpretation is the one put forth by Brother Russell. His view was approximately the same as that held by Chrysostom, except that he supplemented the thought (that the carcass represented Christ) by the additional thought that it also represented the truth concerning Christ and especially the food of "present truth," provided by our Lord during the period of his second presence.

In support of this view, Brother Russell pointed out that, in the parallel passage in Luke (Luke 17:37), these words of our Lord are in reply to a question put to him by the disciples, namely, "Where, Lord?" This question Brother Russell understood as meaning "Where will these [the two on the bed in Luke 17:34 and the two grinding at the mill in Luke 17:53] -- where will these be taken?" - S. S., *Vol. IV*, page D610.

However, their question, "Where, Lord?" may be understood in another way, in line with a further interpretation, which appeals to me as being, probably, the true one. In this, the fifth interpretation noted, the carcass represents *corruption*, and the vultures *judgment*. Let us consider this interpretation, and note how well it fits the context.

Our Lord had just been pointing out a coming time of *judgment*. It would, he "had said, be a time of trouble such as had not been previously in mankind's history. Elaborating his theme, he had reminded them that, except for the few who entered the ark with Noah, the flood had destroyed, not merely a few, but *all* of them. Again, he had observed that when Lot fled from Sodom *all others were destroyed*; even Lot's wife had perished when she looked back. And he had likened these events to the conditions which would obtain during the period of his second advent (Matt. 24:21, 37-39; Luke 17:28-30). It was to all of this that the disciples had responded: "Where, Lord?" (Where will these judgments take place?)

Such a question indicated that, as yet, they understood very little of the ways of God. In their imperfect, immature point of view, God, being almighty, could do anything he chose. They failed to realize that there are some things which even God cannot do. He cannot violate his own principles. He cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2: 13). This they had yet to learn. In their minds, Christ, did he but choose, could restore the kingdom to Israel "at this time" (Acts 1:6), or five hundred years hence, or five thousand. These judgments of which he had just been forewarning them, could take place in Jerusalem, if God so chose, or in Japan. They had yet to learn that God never has and never will act arbitrarily. *He cannot do so.*

To their question, "Where, Lord?" -- where shall these judgments take place? -our Lord replied *in a way they would understand*. He replied with a well-known Oriental proverb, based on a passage in the Book of Job (Job 39:30). "Where the slain are, *there is she*" (the eagle, or vulture -- Job 39:27). "Wheresoever the carcass is, *there will* the vultures be gathered together." (Wheresoever corruption abounds, *there* God's judgments will be sent to clean up the putrid mess.)

This has been the unvarying procedure on the part of Almighty God throughout the centuries. It is plainly to be seen in the case of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, *and will never be more true than in the judgment day of the nations in the end of the Gospel Age.*

And when will that be? And where? I reply: To my understanding it has been in process for years, and will continue to its completion. It is not localized to one or a few nations, but includes, or yet will include, all nations. Its purpose is benevolent, as may be noted in the following lines from an unknown poet:

"The wrath of God is Love's severity
In curing sin-the zeal of righteousness
In overcoming wrong -the remedy
Of Justice for the world's redress.

"The wrath of God is punishment for sin,
In measure unto all transgression due,
Discriminating well and just between
Presumptuous sins and sins of lighter hue.

"The wrath of God inflicts no needless pain
Merely vindictive, of himself to please;
But aims the ends of mercy to attain,
Uproot the evil and the good increase.

"The wrath of God is a consuming fire,
That burns while there is evil to destroy
Or good to purify; nor can expire
Till all things are relieved from sin's alloy.

"The wrath of God is Love's parental rod,
The disobedient to chastise, subdue,
And bend submissive to the will of God,
That Love may reign when all things are made new.

"The wrath of God shall never strike in vain,
Nor cease to strike till sin shall be: no more;
Till God his gracious purpose shall attain,
And earth to righteousness and peace restore."

What to do? Let the Prophet answer: "Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it *may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.- (Zeph. 2: 3).

- P. L. Read

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