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God Is Our Refuge and Strength A Meditation on the Forty-sixth Psalm

THERE is a growing conviction in the minds of thoughtful people that the days in which we live are marked by an atmosphere of finality. For some time we have been living in a new era -- one distinct, not only from pre-1914, but from pre-1938 days; an era which might well be called the atomic era.

In his remarkable forecast of the conditions which would obtain at the close of the Gospel Age, our Lord Jesus predicted that there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25, 26.) And surely there has never been a time when conditions resembled his forecast more accurately than today.

Christians in these days, however, need not be in darkness as to the meaning of the past fifty or sixty eventful years, but, through a knowledge of The Divine Plan, and a daily renewal of their consecration vows, are permitted to occupy an enlightened, privileged position. Such was the Psalmist's calm confidence, as, under inspiration of God's holy spirit, he penned the forty-sixth psalm. Though written, in all probability, to celebrate the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion planned by Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah (Isaiah 37) there is little doubt that it has a prophetic significance -- meeting its larger fulfillment in our day. On this psalm, Luther based his famous hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God." Let us study it carefully and prayerfully, that the reassurance the Lord intends us to obtain therefrom may be ours.

Scholars have pointed out that it consists of three strophes, the conclusion of each being marked by the Selah, and that of the last two by the refrain.

STROPHE No. 1

*God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.*

*Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.*

In his *Studies in the Psalms*, the spirit of Psalm 46 is summed up by *Rotherham* as being "that of stouthearted trust in God. God is nearer than any enemy, and more powerful to relieve from danger than the enemy to inflict it. The images employed in the psalm are bold, being formed by depicting such convulsions of nature as are seldom or never witnessed, yet are easily conceived. The terrible *roar* of the *land* in an earthquake, when the *moun.tains* are seen *staggering into the midst of the sea*, and the resentful sea is witnessed dashing its mighty waves on the *mountains* that overhang the shore: such is the scene which the poet's art presents as a figure of disturbed nations."

Another writer of note, *J. J. Stewart Perowne*, commenting on its *primary* application, submits the following interesting and instructive paragraph:

This and the two following Psalms are hymns of triumph, composed on the occasion of some great deliverance. I am inclined to think that they all celebrate the same event, the sudden and miraculous destruction of the army of Sennacherib under the walls of Jerusalem. That proud host had swept the land. City after city had fallen into the power of the conqueror. The career of Sennacherib and his captains had been one uninterrupted success. The capital itself alone held out, and even there the enfeebled garrison seemed little likely to make a successful resistance. The swollen river had, in the language of the prophet, overflowed all his channels, and risen even to the neck. It was at this crisis that deliverance came. When there were no succours to be expected, when neither king nor army could help the city, God helped her. He, the Lord of Hosts, was in the midst of her, keeping watch over her walls and defending her towers. His Angel went forth at dead of night and smote the host of the Assyrians, and when men awoke in the morning, there reigned in that vast camp the silence and the stillness of death. Such a deliverance must have filled the whole nation with wonder and joy. The old days of Moses and David would seem to have returned. The hopes of Prophets, so great and so glowing, yet so often apparently defeated, seemed now nearer to their accomplishment. The times were at hand when Jerusalem should be indeed the joy of the whole earth, when all nations should acknowledge Jehovah as their King. Her towers, her palaces, the temple of her God, stood in all their beauty, saved by a miracle from the spoiler's hand. God had made Himself known there as a sure refuge, and henceforth His Name would be acknowledged in the earth.

As we come to study the psalm ourselves, it is easy to see that much of its language is figurative. In Bible symbology the word "earth" denotes an "order of society." The psalmist sees such an order of society "removed," (or "changed," RSV). Evidently the scene which the inspired poet seeks to convey to our minds is that of an earthquake, (though the "*land*" should "*roar*" - *Rotherham*) as the result of which, a great change takes place in the form of society. The present heavens and earth are envisioned as being replaced by a new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13.) Moreover the new earth, according to Hab. 2:14, is to be filled with the knowledge of God.

Again, the word "mountains" represents kingdoms. In Isa. 2:2 the prophet informs us

"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," evidently a reference to the time when Christ shall reign. (See also Micah 4:1.) Again, as illustrating the use of figurative language

to describe *the changes now taking place in every strata of society, throughout the world*, note the words of Isaiah in 40:4:

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

This great leveling process, thus predicted by Isaiah, is the very theme portrayed in our psalm.

STROPHE No. 2

*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy places of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

In the first strophe, the fact that these catastrophes of nature are intended as symbols is not specifically stated. The psalmist doubtless assumes that his readers will understand such an elementary matter. But in the second strophe he applies these natural catastrophes. (Psa. 46:6.) He shows them to be symbols of nations. And his point may easily be that, if we are able to trust in God, who is able to control the mighty forces of nature, should we not also be able to trust in him, as he deals with the mighty forces of kings and peoples? He is just as able to control them. They may, and doubtless do, seem powerful enough to us, but to him they are but as "the small dust of the balance . . . all nations before him are as nothing." - Isa. 40:15-17. Remembering this, we shall be able to repose in him, and be at peace in our hearts.

However, before reaching Psa. 45:6, the psalmist has a word of peace to speak to the Lord's true followers in Psa. 46:4 and Psa. 46:5. His first word concerns a river-the river of truth and grace, the streams of which bring rest, peace, comfort. To those who, by faith and consecration, have entered into covenant relationship with God, and have been given the spirit of sonship-to such is granted the peace of God, which passeth understanding. (Phil. 4:7.) In the Millennial Age, at the threshold of which we stand today, these streams will flow out as a river. Meantime, as rivulets they refresh and stimulate all those who are walking in the narrow way.

Such refreshment of spirit comes to us particularly in connection with increased understanding of our Father's word -- and conscious determination, by his grace, to bring our lives ever more completely into line with his will for us. Thus, understanding his plans, and watching them mature, even granted the privilege of being co-laborers with him in some small measure, we find ourselves realizing the "help" promised in verse 5; which help we confidently expect to have continued to us, until our resurrection change, "*right early*," or, as *Rotherham* translates: "*at the approach of the morning*."

The word "tabernacles," in Psa. 46:4, is in the plural, which is puzzling, until one learns that it is an instance where the figure of speech known as the *plural of majesty* is employed. This plural, whenever it occurs, simply means that "great" or "much" or some similar adjective is to be understood as added to the noun. In this case, not two or more tabernacles, but one very great tabernacle is the thought; not great in size, but in glory or importance.

In our study of *Tabernacle Shadows*, we have learned, not only that God dwelleth between the cherubims (Isa. 37:16; Psa. 80:1), but that during our time here we are to live in a condition represented by the "holy" of the tabernacle. There it is that we find ourselves enjoying the light which comes from the golden candlestick; being nourished by the bread of presence; and worshipping daily at the golden altar. Here is the source of our strength, the source of our growth and development as new creatures in Christ Jesus; and so long as we continue in the holy we are immune to the fears of the world. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High [i.e., in the holy, in the condition of consecration], shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1.)

The further word of Psa. 46:5, that "God is in the midst of her," is surely one that brings a sense of strength and security. It suggests, too, the true basis of Christian unity. As with the nation of Israel under Moses, Jehovah was in the center of each encampment, directing its affairs and resolving differences, so, only in a much higher and grander sense, is he the center of affairs in connection with spiritual Israel, leading them onward to final victory. The thought that our Father directs the experiences of us each, and that nothing occurs in our lives without his knowledge and permission - and without him being alongside to help - is very precious to us; surely one which proves most heartening to us, as we recall it from time to time during the days of our pilgrimage.

Moreover, the psalmist's additional assurance in this verse (Psa. 46:5) ought not to be allowed to pass unnoticed. He says that, because God is in the midst of her -- the Church -- "she shall not be moved." Other kingdoms great and small shall be, but not her. We, the church, are on our way to receive "a kingdom which *cannot be moved*." (Heb. 12:28.) Early in the morning of the Millennial Day we have been helped and strengthened by our Father, guided through the complexities of this life, shown his plan, and preserved from the snares and pitfalls of the Adversary. And soon the journey will have ended! How delighted are we at the prospect! -- not alone because it will bring our own deliverance, but also because the opportunity will be extended to all mankind to be set free from the thralldom of sin and death. Surely this kingdom for which we have so long prayed: "Thy Kingdom Come," is the "desire of all nations" spoken of by Haggai (Hag. 2:7), although the nations do not now realize it.

In Psa. 46:6 the psalmist reminds us that, whereas the nations have roared, and the kingdoms have staggered, nevertheless, when *God* speaks, his voice is bound to be heard and obeyed. Louder than the roar of nations is the voice of God. At the sound of *his* voice, the earth (the order of society) melts. The words of the psalmist here find an echo in 2 Pet. 3:10:

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

But Peter does not stop there. He has an encouraging word a little further on, in Psa. 46:13 "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. "

STROPHE No. 3

*Come, behold the works of the Lord,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be exalted in the earth.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

Are Wars to Cease? -- One of our free booklets bears this title. In it the position is developed, from the scriptures, that wars *will cease*. Psalm 46:9 of our psalm declares that they are to cease. They will cease, because God will make them cease. They will cease, when God has permitted such desolation

and horrors that those who wage wars will be compelled to stay the carnage. Just how and when he will put an end to war, we are not wise enough to say. It surely must be very soon, or the entire race of mankind will be destroyed. When he *does* say "Cease," he will do so in such manner that all *will know* that the one speaking is God, and that he must be obeyed. Then will he be *exalted among the nations*.

Something of these sentiments must have been in the mind of the poet (Lord Byron) when he penned those famous lines on "The Destruction of Sennacherib," reprinted below.

The psalmist concludes with the familiar benediction: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." Here, once again, we are reminded of the infinite power whereby God can subdue the entire universe unto himself; reminded also of the fatherly love revealed in his word. Knowing that both his power and love are ever combined on our behalf, our hearts may well respond in those noble lines of Luther

"A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our helper he amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing."

- *Condensed from an article written by A. L. Muir in collaboration with P. L. Read -- published in the October, 1961 Herald. Reprinted here by request.* .

The Destruction of Sennacherib

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold ;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Weeping All Night

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." -Psalm 30:5.

NO OTHER book treats the matter of human woe and sorrow in the wise, tender, sympathetic, helpful manner of the Bible. It assures us that however cold, heartless and disappointing the world may be and our friends may be, or those from whom we may have expected better things, we have, nevertheless, a God of sympathy - a God of love. No heathen religion knows anything of such a God. With them God's attributes are merely more or less of ferocity. Their gods are to be placated and worshiped *from fear* of what they otherwise would do to their creatures. The God of the Bible assures us of his love, his sympathy, in all of our distresses-his interest in our affairs and his provision for the ultimate welfare of all those who will come into the attitude of loving righteousness and hating iniquity -- the only proper attitude of heart' the only one which he can approve and bless with everlasting life.

A NIGHT OF SORROW AND DEATH

The Scriptures point out to us what we recognize to be the truth- that the world has been under a pall and blight and curse of death for six thousand years. Appropriately our text describes this period as a dark time of hard, blighting experiences, a night of weeping -- of sorrow. In harmony with this figure it declares that "darkness covers the [civilized] earth and gross darkness the people."

Not alone does this condition affect those who are in alienation from God through ignorance and superstition and the power of sin, but it affects also those who have accepted the grace of God, who have turned their backs upon sin and who are seeking to walk in the narrow way, in the footsteps of Jesus. Well does the Apostle say, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our Body" - the Body of which Jesus is the Head or Chief and we are symbolical members or an under-priesthood (Rom. 8:22, 23).

There is a difference, however, between the Church and the world in this groaning, as suggested by the Apostle's words. The world groans aloud without alleviation, and even its waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God is a waiting in ignorance; for, being out of touch with the Eternal One, they know not of his gracious purposes and arrangements -- for these are kept secret from all except his sanctified ones. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear [reverence] him; and he will show them his Covenant" (Ps. 25:14). These who possess the secret of the Lord "sorrow not as others who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). They "groan inwardly" and wait for the glorification of themselves and all the brethren, members of the symbolical Body of Christ, by participation in the First Resurrection. The hopes of these must be realized first, before the blessing can come to the "groaning creation" in general. The latter are waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; namely, the Church in glory.

A LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

The Bible represents itself as being the candle of the Lord, the lamp of Divine Truth and enlightenment. But it tells us that its light is not for the world-either now or at any time future. Its light is only for those who by faith and obedience unto consecration seek to walk in the footsteps

of Jesus. They need the light. God provides it for them. These are represented by the Prophet as saying to the Lord, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path [footsteps]" (Ps. 119:105). This light evidently does not shine far into the future, but enough for each onward step as it becomes due.

St. Peter amplifies, the same thought. After telling us of the assurance which he himself and his associates had upon the Mount of Transfiguration when they beheld "*the vision*" (Matt. 17:1-9) of the Lord miraculously transformed and with him Moses and Elijah and heard the voice from heaven, it was forceful to their minds as teaching the coming of our Lord in glory, in due time. Nevertheless, says the Apostle, honoring the Bible above any vision, "We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise" (2 Pet. 1:19), indicating that the morning is at hand and that the Sun of Righteousness will soon fulfill its mission of blessing all the families of the earth.

BUT WHY IS THIS THUS?

Why does God permit the reign of sin and death, injustice, unrighteousness, sorrow, trouble, pain, headaches, heartaches, etc.? Why does he not deal with humanity graciously, kindly, lovingly, as a Father -- as he deals with the angelic sons of God? Is it just or loving on the part of our Creator to bring forth millions of his creatures under these admittedly unfavorable conditions -- beset by weaknesses and sinwardness from their birth and surrounded by others similarly weak, and beset by Satan and his minions-wicked spirits? Is it just that we should thus be in an unequal fight subjected to weaknesses and dying and imperfect conditions on account of the sin of our first parents and then, on the same account, be in danger of an eternity of torture with nine hundred and ninety-nine chances out of a thousand against us?

No, thank God, that thought of eternal torture which came down to us from the dark ages, and which we for a time supposed to be Biblical, we find now is quite unscriptural, when judged in the light of the Bible's own testimony. The eternal torment doctrine assuredly is not of God, not of the Bible, but, as St. Paul declares, one of the "doctrines of devils."

The inheritance of weaknesses, blemishes, sorrows, pain, and trouble, to which we were born, is quite sufficient and, according to the Scriptures, these are all part of death, and all reach their culmination in death, which is the *real penalty* for sin prescribed by our Creator. The fact that these blemishes still continue with the race proves that their sins are not yet blotted out, and to this agree the Scriptures which point us to the oncoming glorious day of blessing a thousand years long, the Millennium, in which Divine blessing will be bestowed upon every member of Adam's race. The merit of Christ's sacrifice, the ransom-price for sinners which he laid down, will by that time be made available "for the sins of the whole world."

The merit of that sacrifice has already been applied to the Church "The household of faith" -- since Pentecost. It has brought to this class very special privileges, though very different ones from those it will bring to the world during the Millennium. The willing and obedient of the world will then get *restitution* gradually (Acts 3:20), back to human perfection and a worldwide Edenic home. The blessing upon the Church is different. The promise now made to those who can and will walk by faith and not by sight is a heavenly one. They are to have a heavenly or spiritual reward and in their resurrection become partakers of the divine nature and have no share thereafter in human nature. The conditions of the present time are severe, proportionately to the greatness and grandeur of their heavenly calling. The terms of acceptance to the divine nature include not only faith and love, but a self-sacrificing will. These sacrifice their earthly restitution

rights and privileges for the privilege of suffering with Christ, that they may also reign with him in his Millennial Kingdom.

LEARNING BY SUFFERING

The same thought is elsewhere expressed. Only those who hear his voice and obey him as the Teacher sent of God will be successful in their endeavor to become members of the "Royal Priesthood," now being selected from the world. Only those who, during the Millennial Age, will hear and obey will there receive this great blessing of eternal salvation -- eternal life under Divine favor, free from the curse. The reward to the world in the close of the Millennium and the reward to the Church in the close of this Gospel Age will each be eternal salvation; but the Church's reward will include eternal glory, heavenly glory, and joint-heirship with the Redeemer himself in his great work of administering God's blessings to the world of mankind, as Mediator of the New Covenant between God and men -- the world.

It seemed wise to our Heavenly Father that our Lord Jesus should learn obedience through sufferings and be tested in respect to his willingness to endure suffering for righteousness' sake. How appropriate it is that the same Father should make similar arrangements for all of the Church, whom he will receive from among the race of Adam to be members of the Royal Priesthood under Jesus, the High Priest of our order. We see a necessity for this, not only as respects our own testings and a thorough proof of our own heart-loyalty to the Lord, but additionally we see a wisdom on God's part in thus preparing a priesthood of the future. The term priest as recognized among the Jews was not merely one who offered sacrifices, although every priest was of necessity a sacrificer. The special mission of the priestly tribe among the other tribes was that of instructing, helping, healing, teaching. And so God is preparing a Royal Priesthood for the Millennial Age to bless, to heal, to teach, to uplift all the willing and obedient.

The royalty of the priesthood signifies that it will no longer be a sacrificing class, for all sacrificing will be at an end. It will be a glorious class, royal, of the Divine nature, and representatives with our Lord Jesus of the Divine power. As priests who will have to do with judging and chastening, healing, and helping humanity, how much sympathy do we suppose that these Royal Priests should have? Are they not to be on the Divine plane of glory, "members of the Body" of Messiah, the great kingly priest after the order of Melchizedek? And of him has not the Apostle written that he must be a faithful and merciful High Priest, able also to sympathize with the people in their infirmities? Does he not declare that it was for this reason that our Lord was touched with a feeling for humanity's infirmities? And is it not in perfect keeping with this that all those accepted as "members of his Body" should have such experiences in this sacrificing time as would demonstrate their loyalty to the Lord and guarantee their deep sympathetic interest in the world, then committed to their care, To such will be committed the work of human *restitution*, uplift out of sin and death conditions -mental, moral, and physical.

THE MORNING OF JOY

How glad we should be that our Heavenly Father's sympathy for us will provide "a morning of joy" to be ushered in, in his "due time!" Additionally he sympathizes with us to the extent that he has given us in advance a message and Revelation and explanation to comfort us, to sustain us in the way! We have already seen that this Revelation is only for those who have the eyes of faith and the ears of faith at the present time. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." "He that hath an ear, let him hear."

We recognize the wisdom of God in withholding the secret of his plan from the world in general. We recognize that for the world to know the deep things of God at the present time would be injurious rather than helpful to them. It might possibly work an interference with the Divine Program. Nevertheless we are bound to sympathize with the poor groaning creation in its blindness and ignorance. The poor world knows not why it came into being. In an animal fashion, eating, drinking, etc., it seeks to use the opportunities of present life and after a few short years full of trouble, it goes down into the tomb, ignorant of the purposes of its creation, and usually considerably enthralled by fear respecting the future beyond the portals of death.

How we may rejoice in spirit as we perceive the length and breadth and height and depth of the Divine Program for the future and the blessings which it will bring to this "groaning creation." How we long for the time to come when the Church shall be made ready through the sufferings of this present time for the glories of the future -- of the Kingdom! No wonder the Apostle declares, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he [the Lord] is pure (1 John 3:3). He is our exemplar, our pattern. We seek to copy him. Although we cannot hope to be like him in the flesh, we can be like him in the spirit of our minds and thus be of the character-likeness which the Father will be pleased to honor with a share in the "First Resurrection." By that glorious "change" we shall be made like him actually and see him as he is and share his glory.

The morning of joy, the Millennial Morning, of course, cannot be ushered in until the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. Its beams of grace and Truth will flood the earth with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God to such a degree that it will drive out, expel, all ignorance, superstition and sin, which have worked such havoc in our race.

But what is this Sun of Righteousness? Whence comes it? The Bible answers the question by telling us that it symbolically represents the Lord himself and the elect Church of this Gospel Age. The Sun of Righteousness is a synonym for the Seed of Abraham, of whom it is written, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Mystery hidden for a time from many is the fact that the Church is to share with her Lord in every feature of his glorious work, not only in suffering, but also in reigning. Thus we have St. Paul's assurance that the overcomers will be members of the Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). And we have our Lord's own words that this faithful class will be represented in the great Sun of Righteousness, the Great Messiah, the great Prophet, Priest, King, and Mediator between God and men (Matt. 13:43).

"WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS"

St. Peter, in viewing the prospects of the Church, inquires as to "what manner of persons we ought to be in all manner of holy living and godliness." He refers to us, who know that the present order of things is the reign of sin and death from which our Lord died to deliver us. What manner of persons ought *we* to be, who have heard the Lord's invitation to joint-heirship in his Kingdom, and who know that we are now on trial to determine by our voluntary course our worthiness or unworthiness of that glorious position to which we have been called by God's favor! How paltry, how insignificant, do all the affairs of the world appear in comparison to this great *prize* set before us in the gospel!

And what should be our attitude toward the world, seeing from this inside standpoint of Divine Revelation the real condition of the world and God's sympathy for it? Its ignorance should make us very sympathetic, and very much disposed to lend a helping hand of relief in every possible manner. We should be ever ready to remove the scales of blindness from the mental vision of all who give indication of a desire for God-any who seem to be "feeling after God, if haply they might find him" (Acts 17:27). Only such will be ready for the Kingdom, fit for the Royal Priesthood, every member of which must be "touched with a feeling" for earth's infirmities.

- C. T. Russell

The Christian of Today as He Ought to Be

AN INDISPENSABLE element in the life of the Christian is that vital relationship to the mind of God which shall establish and preserve the strongest possible connections with the great Source of spiritual power.

Such connections will necessitate insulation from every contaminating influence of the world, and from all inordinate desire for things non-conducive to the highest progress and development. As the most potent testimony is that of example, the man of God will say with the Apostle, "This one thing I do-I press toward the mark. Hence his affections will be set on things above; he will have but one mind, the mind of Christ; he will say, in apostolic phraseology, "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ." Primarily, fundamentally, indefatigably, he must be Christ's man, a fearless ambassador of the King of kings.

The Christian of the times must have a vision. In Ezekiel 13:3, we find a reference to shepherds who "have seen nothing." The Prophet Isaiah received a vision of the future. Beholding the glory of God in that power which He is yet to reveal, he could say, "Here am I: send me," because in pictorial representation he had seen the fulfillment of the great Eternal Purpose, the consummation of the program of the centuries, the inauguration of a dynasty that should send to the eternal skies the glories of its new-born righteousness and truth and love; a regime 'long delayed indeed, yet borne hitherward on the wings of those gold-hued Biblical promises which cannot fail, but are yea and amen.

Christian of today, have you caught Isaiah's vision, Abraham's vision, Ezekiel's vision, St. Paul's vision -- all picturing an era when God shall make all things new by marvelous secrets of life opened up and by Biblical instruction enlightening the mind, accomplishing its desideratum of an everlasting fraternity of men, a world-wide community of love? If so, you have something to build upon that shall stand, and may push forward your work in the calm assurance that the ineffable goal of your life lies just ahead, whereat you shall find the reward of courage and zeal and faithfulness in the service of Truth, which represents God Himself.

The Christian should be in fullest sympathy with the mighty, throbbing, burning, yearning heart of humanity. He should have a broad outlook and see humanity *as it is*. That will most faithfully show him its needs. What has he for a portion of the billion and a half human souls on this planet? They are needful souls. The "bread of life" alone will fill them; the "water of life" alone can satisfy their unquenched thirst. As Jesus felt the burden of the world's woes, so should His servants, and each, while praying the prayer of prayers, "Thy Kingdom Come," should be an exemplar of the righteousness of that Kingdom in his daily life.

The Christian should be genial, approachable, adaptable, and know how to slip off his coat and put his shoulder to the wheel when it gets into the rut. Are his spiritual affairs not progressing? Perhaps the reason is that his gardener is underpaid, or that he has reduced his factory employees to a wage allowing of bare existence. Such doings would be "sin in the camp," the very thing that caused the Israelites to be defeated at Ai. "Beginning at Jerusalem," says the Word. If the Christian wants to be a power for good, let him begin at home and manifest love in the little things. Let him study the law of human equality, and the conditions of human inequality and derive wisdom therefrom. Such truths may seem homely and stale, but they are vital and basic, and constitute the *sine qua non* of the entire matter before us.

Let the Christian cause his own personal love to be communicated to and felt by those around him. Let them see this intensity of love vibrating in his words and deeds, pulsating in his conversation, and large good is bound to result, for the greatest of all laws is then operating, and that law spells light, harmony, and life.

It has been said that the mightiest forces are the silent ones. While the looms of men tell forth with noisy hum the story of their industry, those of nature and the universe are often soundless. No one ever yet heard the footfall of the sun as he steps over the circle of the East and weaves from threads of light the gold-embroidered vestments of days. No one ever heard the voice that whispered down in the ear of earth that the time was come to awake from winter's sleep and once more don the verdant attire of strength and joyousness. And what finely attuned ear ever heard the loom's working in the grand trees of orchard as they labor in season to produce their princely fruitage of the apple, the peach, the plum, and the pear? Who has heard the flapping of Night's wings as they slowly bore him o'er a slumbering land? Who, the saraband of spring, or the music of the spheres, or the steeds of the moon as they draw a thousand million tons of water from ocean's bosom and pile it up upon the land? The answer to these questions is, None. Such mighty works of God are done in silence. Thus also in silence operates the eternal spirit of divine Truth as it cleanses mind and heart and life, and finding daily expression through the avenue of the Christian bears superlative testimony of Him whose blessed and glorious name is Love.

Should the Christian be an economist? He should. In the divine economy nothing is lost. Every tear, every pang that rends the heart is designed for a purpose. Some day the broken threads of life will be gathered up and spun to a conclusion, and woven into a tissue of matchless beauty, and then all results of the present shall appear. The Christian should know that, figuratively speaking, God gathers the tears of the saints and fashions them into garlands of pearls to be worn throughout eternity; then shall he have comfort for sorrowing hearts about him, even "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

The Christian should be an Empire man in the highest sense, recognizing God as the only true Empire Builder, who raiseth up and setteth down, and can alone say to a kingdom, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." He should see in present institutions a temporary arrangement, to afford the world an experience calculated to be for lasting good, and to give place to a universal dynasty where Love shall be the king law. Not in present empires and their affairs, neither in science or philosophy should the Christian's hope be centered, but in the Love of God, and in the Gospel of His eternal Son.

The Christian should see that mighty, irresistible, transforming forces are at work today, and that the world really stands at the birth of a New Era. This is, no fancy theory, but a fact; and these forces cannot be ignored or trifled with lest they crush the offender. Political Economy, the Capitalistic platform, the resounding cry of Laborism, practical training of the young, Government elections, International peace, etc., are questions at issue at the present time; and the Christian, when approached on these subjects, should deal with them from the viewpoint of his Text Book, the Word of God, for therein lies the final authority for knowledge and judgment in all matters pertaining to human affairs.

The Christian needs a good backbone. He should be like "Mount Zion that standeth fast forever." His attitude toward life and his dealings therewith should call attention to the glory of the commonplace, and teach men to gather good from the elements right at hand, and to use circumstances as stepping-stones to grander heights. His face should reflect the radiance of Truth itself; his eyes should be deep with the depth of eternal things; his tongue should be moved by the Holy Spirit. He should have complete consecration to start with, the grace of God to go along with, the Kingdom of Heaven to end with. For such as is here described, there is work to be done. The Master has, come and calleth for him. - **W. Sargeant.**

Faith for Today

"Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" - Luke 18:8.

THE PURPOSE of the parable which opens this chapter is to teach the lesson "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." To this end Jesus used the story of a judge who after long refusals finally heeded a widow's pleas. The heavenly judge is like the unjust judge in that he delays justice, but not like him in being "unjust," or in his motive for the delaying of justice.

This parable was much needed in our Lord's day, for the rabbis had taught, Dummelow says, "that God must not be fatigued by too frequent prayer. Three times a day was enough. 'If a man comes to address you every hour, you say that he holds you cheap: the same is true of God, whom no man ought to fatigue by praying every hour.'" This false teaching was doubtless offset by this parable for many of Jesus' hearers; but it was meant especially for our day, for Jesus so indicates in his application of it in the text quoted above. This remark was introduced by a "nevertheless," indicating that not all in our day would profit by Christ's teaching on this point.

Faithfulness in prayer, which is both a privilege and a duty, is taught by comparison and contrast in this parable.

"This widow was a stranger, nothing related to the judge; but God's praying people are his own elect, whom he knows, and loves, and delights in, and has always concerned himself for. She was but one, but the praying people of God are many, all of whom come to him on the same errand, and agree to ask what they need. (Matt. 18:19) . . . She came to a judge that bid her keep her distance; we come to a Father that bids us come boldly to him, and teaches us to cry, Abba, Father. She came to an unjust judge; we come to a righteous Father (John 17:25), one that regards his own glory and the comforts of his poor creatures, especially those in distress, as widows and fatherless. She came to this judge purely upon her own account; but God is himself, engaged in the cause which we are soliciting; and we can say, Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause; and what wilt thou do to thy great name? She had no friend to speak for her, to add force to her petition, and to use interest for her more than her own; but we have an Advocate with the Father, his own Son, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and has a powerful prevailing interest in heaven. She had no promise of speeding, no, nor any encouragement given her to ask; but we have the golden sceptre held out to us, are bid to ask, and it is promised that it shall be given us. She could have access to the judge only at some certain times; but we may cry to God day and night, at all hours, and therefore may rather hope to prevail by importunity. Her importunity was provoking to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our importunity is pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is his delight, and therefore, we may hope, shall avail much, if it be an effectual fervent prayer." - Matthew Henry.

The parable supposes that all God's people are praying people. Doubt on that point is not suggested, but the parable warns that some would grow weary of leaving their affairs in God's hands (verse 1), and the application of verse 8 points the finger of warning at us who live in the day of the Lord's return, and inquires, "Are you faithfully praying, 'Lead thou me on'; or have some of you returned to the old days when you 'loved to choose and see the path'?" At least that is the purport of some translations. That lesson of the parable needs to be taken sincerely to heart.

Another of Jesus' parables, that of the sparrows and the falling hair, was given that all might be assured that our heavenly Father is not like the "unjust judge who feared this widow 'might 'stun"

him with the blows of her continual attack. Instead, the heavenly judge has his ear open to the cries of "his own elect," coming up to him "day and night." It is by his invitation, amplified and exemplified by our Lord and his messengers, that they are thus persistent. (See Isa. 62:6, 7; 1 Chron. 16:11; Eph. 6:18; etc.) The clause, "though he bear long with them," found *in* the seventh verse, others render so as to give the thought of patience as regards the world and the Church. Douay: "Will he have patience in their regard?" Riverside: "Will not God do justice for his elect, who are calling to him day and night, even though he is long-suffering with their adversaries?" Twentieth Century: "Will not God see that his own chosen people, who cry to him night and day, have justice done them while he bears with their impatience?" Clark sees in it the thought of compassion. Those who accept the invitation to come freely to the throne of grace find none of these thoughts out of harmony with their experience. The renderings of the Revised Versions, in the text and in the margin, are also verified in their experience: "He is long-suffering over them," and "He is slow to punish on their behalf," as he was slow *to* punish typical Egypt though Israel cried to him day and night. Since all these thoughts are valuable to the new creature, it would not be unwarranted to think that the Lord has left the scholars in doubt that we might have in one short clause all these truths.

A contrast is found in the next sentence where we are assured "he will avenge them speedily." Here are two events, stated in the order of their occurrence -- two thousand years of being "slow to punish on their behalf"; but the judge "will avenge them speedily" when the Kingdom has arrived, and he takes his power. The arrival of this judge upon the scene is heralded by "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, reminding one of the avenging of "all the righteous blood shed from Abel to Zachariah" upon the generation *in* Jerusalem in the year A. D. 70 -- a time of trouble that will destroy all institutions in opposition to his Kingdom, a trouble so severe that except for its being cut short there would be no flesh saved. In fact there is no intimation of any individual beingsaved out of it except those who seek meekness and righteousness -- those in harmony with the-class the widow of the parable represents.

No one who knows the compassionate heart of our God can suppose that the tribulations of either A. D. 70 or recent years on "his chosen, people," natural Israel, were mere vindictiveness. Rather, such recognize this as God's bearing long with them and their adversaries, and by faith's vision they see' a new covenant to be established with them, made necessary by past failures, but assuring that this time "he will speedily do them justice." However, since the context indicates that Jesus *was* addressing this discourse to his disciples, and had previously been warning them *to* expect opposition. (17:1, 2), at least the principal application of it must be anticipated in the experiences of the disciples, "when the Son of man comes." But the question Jesus asks is not a logical one to connect with the parable, nor does it seem appropriate to address to those who will at that time be so faithful as to draw down persecution on their heads -- if the King James rendering is the best one: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" As regards the world in general and lukewarm Christians in particular, this is indeed a very proper, question, and the negative answer *implied* is clearly taught in other Scriptures, as for instance, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love, of many shall wax cold." (Matt. 24:12.) For those who are faithful to the Lord and the Word, there is, however, a much more valuable and more helpful translation of Luke 18:8, in the Diaglott rendering: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find *this* belief on the earth?" Rotherham by a footnote gives the same rendering: "I tell you -- he will execute their vindication, quickly! Nevertheless though the Son of Man do come will he, after all, find *this* faith on the earth?" Will the Christians of that time manifest their faith in the Lord by being willing to leave to him the time and method of vindicating their name; *will* they be Willing to be spoken against "as evil doers," knowing that in his due time the maligners "shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead; believing, too, his assurance that these same individuals *will* many of them some day praise God on their behalf. (1 Peter 2:12;

4:5.) (The use of "this" in the Diaglott translation is justified by many passages in the King James Version, such as Matthew 14:15; 15:12; etc.) The Variorum Bible cites J. B. McLennan and F. Godet as favoring this translation.

Barnes comments: "Though this is true that God will avenge his elect, yet will he find his elect *faithful*? The danger is not that *God will* be, unfaithful -- he will surely be true to *his* promises; but the danger is that his elect-his afflicted people-will be discouraged; will not persevere in prayer; will not continue to have confidence in him; and *will*, under heavy trials, sink into despondency. The sole meaning of this phrase, therefore, is, that *there is more danger that his people would grow weary, than that God would be found unfaithful and fail to avenge his elect*. For this cause Christ spoke the parable, and by the *design* of the parable this passage is to be interpreted. . . . There *is* a close connection in what Christ says, and it should be understood as referring to what he said before. The truth that he had been teaching was that God would deliver his people from their calamities and save them, though he suffered them to be long tried. He asks them here whether, when he came, he should find *this faith*, or a belief of *this truth*, among his followers? Would they be found persevering in prayer, and *believing* that God would yet avenge them or would they cease to pray *always*, and *faint*?"

The comment of Ellicott is similar: "The English, which, suggests the thought that God bears with, i.e., tolerates his elect, is misleading. What is meant is, that he shows himself *slow to anger over them*, 'i.e., where they are concerned. They implore that 'longsuffering' for themselves., They are tempted to murmur when it is extended to others. (2 Pet. 3:9); . . . The question implies, it is obvious, an answer in the negative. When St. Luke wrote his Gospel, men were witnessing a primary, though partial, fulfilment of the prophecy. Iniquity *was* abounding, and the love of many was waxing *cold*. And yet in one sense he was near, even at the doors (James 5:8, 9), when men thought that the wheels of his chariot drove slowly. So has it been, and so will it be, in the great 'days of the Lord' in the Church's history, which are preludes of the final Advent; so shall it be in that Advent itself. The Greek noun for, 'faith' has the article, possibly as implying the special kind of faith of which the Parable of the Widow had been an illustration."

"Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord." (Heb. 10:30.) "The word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." (Heb. 2:2.) "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your, persecutions and tribulations "that ye endure: which is *a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God*, that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer. (2 Thess. 1:4-8.) Let us then if we have the privilege of suffering for righteousness' sake, or are companions of those that are so used, rightly evaluate our experience, "*rejoicing that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*. (Acts 5:41.) "For what glory is *it, if*, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye *take it patiently*, this is acceptable with God. (1 Peter 2:20.) "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye." - 1 Peter 3:14; 4:14.

- P. E. Thomson.

The Levites--Type and Antitype

"The company and assembly of the first-born in heaven enrolled." - Heb. 12:23, Young's Literal Translation.

REGARDLESS OF our predilection in favor of any interpretation, one objective and one alone must guide us as we reconsider this perennially interesting subject. And that is, to ascertain in humble and teachable spirit, *what saith the Lord* With this, the proper attitude of mind, let us consider anew the Scriptural facts relative to the tribe of Levi with full assurance of God's blessing as we endeavor to learn first, who the Levites were; secondly, whom they typify; and, finally, the ultimate destiny of this antitypical class.

THE SELECTION OF LEVI

The patriarch Jacob's descendants through his twelve sons, after having multiplied in Egypt, were reduced to virtual slavery. God raised up for them a great deliverer, Moses, and by ten plagues revealed His mighty power, until Pharaoh permitted the Israelites to depart. In the last terrible plague that befell Egypt, all the first-born of man and beast were slain except the first-born of Israel, who were preserved by the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb. (Exod. 12:7, 13.) In view of this deliverance, God claimed all the first-born of man and beast as His own in a special sense. (Exod. 13:2.) During the wilderness journey, He separated the Levites, and took them and their cattle instead of the first-born of man and beast among the other tribes. "Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: Lam the Lord." (Num. 3:45.) From the tribe of Levi, thus set apart for the special service of Jehovah, God took Aaron and his sons for the priesthood (Exod. 28:1) , giving them the tribe of Levi for their attendants. Thus all the priests were Levites, but not all the Levites were priests. Henceforth the Levites always represented the first-born delivered on the Passover night.

The whole arrangement is given in the following words (Num. 3:6-10): "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation ["charge," in the sense of duties with which they are charged in behalf of Aaron and the congregation] before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation [that is, the tabernacle itself, with all its furniture], and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron, and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger [that is, one "not of the seed of Aaron," Num. 16:40] that cometh nigh [nigh to the sanctuary to perform any e priestly function] shall be put to death."

In the eighth chapter of Numbers, a more detailed account is given of the Levites' inception of sacred service, and should be carefully considered in its relation to the antitype. We note particularly verses 13 to 15: "Thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto *the Lord*. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the *Levites shall be Mine*. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and *offer them for an offering.*" Thus an entire tribe was set apart for God's service; the Levites holding a nearer

relation to God than the other tribes, the priests than the Levites, and the high priest than the subordinate priests. The Levites alone could minister to the priests, but were themselves forbidden to exercise any priestly function.

The tribe of Levi received no inheritance with the other tribes in the land of Canaan. It was necessary, therefore, that an adequate provision should be made for their maintenance. This was included in the declaration: "Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; *the Lord is his inheritance*, according as the Lord thy God promised him" (Dent. 10:9), which is several times repeated for substantiality (Num. 18:20, 24; Deut. 18:1, 2; Ezek. 44:28); for when God gives an inheritance to His servants, it meets all their wants, temporal as well as spiritual. Accordingly, God ordained that the other tribes should give the tenth part or tithe of all the increase of their fields and of their flocks and herds: "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." (Num. 18:21.) The Levites, in turn, were commanded to give a tenth of this tenth for the maintenance of the priests. - Ver. 26-32.

"The Levites have no part among you; for the *Priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance.*" (Josh. 18:7.) Receiving thus no territorial possessions, forty eight cities were assigned to them by lot, out of the inheritance of the other tribes, with ample suburbs (pasture-grounds) for their cattle. (Num. 35; Josh. 121.) Of the above named forty-eight cities, the priestly order had thirteen, all in the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin; and six of them were also cities of refuge, three on either side of the Jordan. By this arrangement the Levites were distributed throughout the whole Hebrew commonwealth, and so enabled, if faithful to their office, to exert the widest influence for the maintenance of the Mosaic institutions in their purity. Thus the prophetic announcement of Jacob respecting Simeon and Levi, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Gen. 49:7), was so fulfilled in the case of this tribe as to be made a blessing to the tribe itself and to the whole nation; for the functions of the Levites were spiritual, and they became, in a measure at least, the instructors of the people.

THE ANTITYPICAL LEVITES

Is there any question as to there being an antitype? Surely not when we summarize the preceding paragraphs and note afresh the minuteness of detail given us by God's Word in regard to this class. In brief, the Scriptures teach:

- (1) On the Passover night the first-born of Israel are saved by the blood of the paschal lamb.
- (2) For a permanent memorial they are exchanged for the tribe of Levi, which is set apart to a spiritual service.
- (3) From the Levites the high priest and underpriests are selected.
- (4) Under the supervision of the priests, the Levites perform the tabernacle service and are also instructors of the Law to the people.

Thus far we have merely recited the Scriptural facts upon which all will agree. In interpreting these acts, however, patience must be exercised by all, inasmuch as there is some honest and sincere disagreement. Taking the above points in the same order, the following appears to be their logical interpretation:

(1) The Passover night represents the period of the Gospel Age, during which a class from amongst mankind, namely the Church of the First-born (Heb. 12:23) are delivered from the danger of destruction by the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. (I Pet. 1:2; Rom. 5:9; Rev. 5:9; Acts 20:28; John 1:29, 36; Rev. 13:8.) These are "passed from death unto life" and are become "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" and "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." "For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." - James 1:18; Rev. 14:4; 1 Cor. 5:7.

The deliverance of the world follows that of the Church, and was pictured in the departure from Egypt (Satan's order) of all Israel after the "passing over" of the first-borns. The next morning typified the Millennial morning; and the subsequent passing through the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts, pictured the work of the Restitution Age culminating in the final removal of all evil forces.

(2) The selection of the tribe of Levi as permanent representatives of the first-born, and their separation to the tabernacle ministry can well represent the called-out class of Christians consecrated to God's service. These constitute the "household of God" and are "the household of faith"; the "Church of the *First born*, which are written in heaven." (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10; Heb. 12:23.) These are set apart to God's service and have made with Him a "covenant by sacrifice"; thus emulating their Master, whose footsteps they seek to follow in fulfilling their vow to do not their own, but the divine will.

(3) The elevation of some of the Levites to the Priesthood, comprising a High Priest and Under priests, seems to teach an eventual separation of these called-out, consecrated ones into two classes. Other Scriptures bear out this thought of a division of true believers into two classes. Actually, all believers, sincere and otherwise, can be listed under four headings, viz.: those who go into the Second Death; those who are mere professors, "tares"; and the two classes mentioned by St. Paul in the oft-quoted words of 1 Cor. 3:11-15: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Here then, are two Christians, both justified, consecrated, and spirit-begotten-justified, because they build on the only Foundation (Psa. 40:2; Matt. 7:24; 1 Cor. ,10:4); consecrated, because none can be related to the Master except they take up their cross and deny themselves; spirit-begotten, because they are building a spiritual structure. "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. 5:4,) Both have come "under the blood"; both are antitypical first-borns and consequently, antitypical Levites. Both are endeavoring to emulate the High Priest of their profession (Heb. 3:1); both are probationary members of the Royal Priesthood. (1 Pet. 2:5, 9.) The superstructure they must build is that crystallization of spiritual principles, that attainment of Christ-mindedness which is best summed up in the one glorious resolution: "Not my will but Thine, O Lord, be done." Theirs is a purely voluntary walk, neither demanded by the justice of God, nor coerced by His Power. Their attainment of the divine goal, joint-heirship with Christ, depends entirely upon the carrying out of their consecration vows, by means of the "grace sufficient" God has promised to supply. "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (Psa. 50:5.) Both are called in the one hope of their calling, but only the one is chosen and abides faithful. Only the one follows the "Lamb whithersoever He goeth." The other, alas, fails to realize that complete submission of self-will requisite for complete overcoming, and consequently is unable to endure the fiery tests which

come in the "way" of suffering with Christ. Nevertheless they are beloved of the Lord, for their failure is not due to willful sin, but solely to an avoidance of the sacrificing necessary to carry out the terms of their covenant.

In nothing perhaps is the difference between these two types of Christians more discernible than in a comparison of the lives of Abraham and Lot. Both love the Lord, both are righteous, both leave all to come to the Promised Land. But the one completely submerges self-will in a marvelous obedience to the will of God; the other endeavors to do both God's will and his own, and succeeds in doing neither. Yet Lot is "righteous" and God spares him, though so "as by fire." There is much food for thought here for the sincere follower of Christ.

(4) What shall be the eventual position of these two classes? There can be no question regarding the members of the Royal Priesthood -- theirs, a position of joint-heirship with Christ; Kings and Priests for a thousand years. They -- the "Abrahams" -- shall out work all God's gracious provisions on behalf of the human race. Theirs, the joy incomprehensible.

But what of the antitypical Levites -- the "Lots"? Three conclusions offer themselves. The first, that they shall be cleansed by the "fire" and thus become members of the "little flock," we reject as doing violence to other Scriptures. The second, that they shall eventually occupy a position on the earthly plane as perfect human beings is also inadmissible. We reason as follows:

(1) They are a class consecrated to do God's will.

(2) As human beings, they in common with all mankind were born in sin and "shapen in iniquity," and were "dead in trespasses and sins"; and thus were alienated from God. - Psa. 51:5; Eph. 2:1.

(3) Before their consecration could be acceptable, they needed to be justified from Adamic condemnation.

(4) Because of His purpose to "call out a people for His name," God had arranged the means of this justification, by sending His Son to die on Calvary as the ransom price for all.

(5) God's object in providing this justification was to give the individual an opportunity to consecrate himself and thus to become a joint-sacrificer with the Lord Jesus, as a member of His Body.

(6) God marks His acceptance of their consecration by begetting them through the Holy Spirit.

(7) Thenceforth they are "new creatures"; sons begotten to the spirit plane. That which is born (after being first begotten) of the spirit is spirit. John 3:6.

(8) The condition of God's acceptance of their consecration was their "death" to all the human rights which would accrue to them otherwise, in the Millennial Age, as a result of the ransom sacrifice of Christ. The grace of justification was granted to them to enable them to offer up these rights by sacrifice, thus becoming "dead with Christ." These rights, once given up, cannot be taken back again. None of the spirit-begotten, therefore, can be reinstated to earthly hopes or human life, for all rights to these were sacrificed at consecration.

(9) They must either be born on the spirit plane or die; and since St. Paul says they will be "saved," death certainly is not to be their portion.

(10) In the wilderness the Lord set the Levites apart for His service. Thenceforth they were to represent the first-born of all the tribes. These were typical of the Church of the First-born. (Heb. 12:23.) They were given title to no land, thus illustrating the fact that the antitypical Levites would be without earthly inheritance, but would be called to a heavenly inheritance.

In view of these considerations we are led to the third conclusion, namely, that the antitypical Levites, after passing through the disciplinary experiences arranged by the Lord during each one's lifetime to reveal the vanity of self-will ("saved, yet so as by fire"), will be raised to a spirit plane of existence, in which state, under the supervision of the Royal Priesthood, they shall be active ministrants in the great work of reconciliation during the Millennial Age. This we believe is the teaching of the Spirit in the typical work of the Levites on the days subsequent to the Day of Atonement.

In conclusion we would again stress the necessity of clearly discerning the importance of the doctrine of justification in its relation to this question of the future condition of the antitypical Levites. Once it is seen that consecration means the complete surrender of all earthly rights received through justification as a result of the ransom sacrifice, and that God's acceptance of one's consecration is marked by spirit-begetting -- once these things are seen, it seems obvious that all the called of this Gospel Age must either be born on the spirit plane or go into the Second Death. There cannot possibly be a return to human rights, as the "covenant by sacrifice" is irrevocable with the Lord.

And finally, though we accept the Scriptures as teaching the eventual existence of a spiritual class subordinate to the "little flock," let us emphasize the glorious position to which we are all called, even to joint-heirship with our High Priest, and strive so to run as to obtain. Let no spirit of slothfulness be engendered because of the Levitical type, that thereby we may be led to feel that if one does not attain to the highest position, the lower will in any case be allotted. Such a disposition is very dangerous and may result in the complete loss of all. We can never plead divine grace as an excuse for indifference or carelessness; for sin ever lieth at the door, and "if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in Him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe [in all the fulness of faith] to the saving of the soul." - Heb. 10:38, 39.

- *W. J. Siekman*

The Question Box

Revelation 18 - 22

Question:

What is the sequence of events to be expected in connection with the Second Advent of our Lord?

Answer:

When the series of articles captioned "Even at the Doors" is resumed, it is expected that this question will be considered in greater detail. Meantime, perhaps the following paragraphs may suffice.

As the events unfold I shall be able to speak with greater certainty than would become me today. However, I think I can find the answer in the last five chapters of the Book of Revelation.

Beginning with Rev. 18, and continuing to the end of the Book I find a series of 12 distinct visions *narrated in orderly sequence*. If I mistake not, they commence with the times in which we now live, and cover the entire period up to the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, at the close of the Millennial Age. The events thus symbolized are"

1. The fall of Babylon. - Rev. 18.

This, in my judgment, has been in process for years, but is not yet complete.

2. The first resurrection, that is to say, the resurrection of the Church, symbolized as the Marriage of the Lamb. - Rev. 19:6-9.

This too, I think, has been in process for years; my belief being based on the text: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord *from henceforth*." (Rev. 14:13.) It is my conviction that this text began to be fulfilled some years ago. First the dead in Christ were raised, as predicted in 1 Thess. 4:16; then, ever since, the remaining members of the Church, one by one, as they complete their course in death, are blessed by an instantaneous change to perfection as spirit beings. As soon as the Church is complete on the other side the veil, the Marriage will occur.

3. The glorious epiphany of Christ *with* his Church. - Rev. 19:11.

Note: The Church, in my understanding, is to share in her Lord's epiphany. (Col. 3:4.) This, in my judgment, has not yet taken place, nor, indeed, can it, until the last member of the Church has gone beyond the veil and the Marriage has occurred. (That some of the last members of the Church are still in the flesh I firmly believe, with all due respect to those who think otherwise.)

4. The *final* Armageddon conflict and victory. - Rev. 19:17, 21.

Note: -- While there have been some notable conflicts the *final* one, *and the ensuing victory*, is, in my judgment, still future.

Moreover, if I understand the matter correctly, it is in connection with *this* event, that Israel's experience, spoken of by the Prophet as "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), is to occur. Those who are looking for the time of Jacob's trouble to occur before the Church is gone, are looking for the right thing at the wrong time. What is taking place in the Middle East is merely

preparatory; not only will the Church be glorified, but even the Great Company will have completed its earthly experiences, and, while not part of the Bride, will have shared the blessedness of the Marriage Supper (Rev. 19:9), before the time of Jacob's trouble occurs.

Jacob will be saved out of his trouble, by Christ and his Church, operating from the other side the veil, directing the victorious Armageddon conflict.

5. The binding of Satan. - Rev. 20:1-3.

In my view this has not yet occurred. World conditions fully confirm this. One has only to read the headlines, to leaf through a few popular magazines, to listen to the radio, to glance at television, to review the newspaper advertisements of theatres and motion picture houses, to realize this. Evident it is that, far from being bound, Satan is still going about like a roaring lion; still operating as an angel of light. Evident it is that far from hearing the calm, strong voice of Jesus speaking, in tones of *kingly authority*: "Peace, be still," we hear only the expression of men's hearts failing them for fear, looking after those things that are coming on the earth. Moreover, when we turn from the advertisements of theatres and motion picture houses to the advertisements of the "Church" page, or leaf through religious magazines, it becomes increasingly apparent that the powers of the (ecclesiastical) heavens are being shaken. - Luke, 21:26.

6. The Millennial reign of Christ and his Church. - Rev. 20:4-6.

7. The loosing of Satan for a little season, at the end of the Millennium. - Rev. 20:7, 8.

8. The Post-millennial apostasy, and the judgment on it. - Rev. 20:9.

9. The destruction of Satan. - Rev. 20:10.

10. The judgment of the dead, small and great. - Rev. 20:12, 13.

11. The destruction of the last enemy, death, with all that the word destruction implies. - Rev. 20:14.

12. The eternal Kingdom of God. - Rev. 21; Rev. 22:5.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be. " - 2 Peter 3:11.

- P. L. Read.

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