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A Meditation for the New Year

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea." - Psalm 46:1, 2, R.S.V.

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 in the difficult days which lie ahead.

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!

What Say the Scriptures? Basic Bible Studies No. 4 -The Wages of Sin

"In Adam all die." - 1 Corinthians 15:22.

OUR three studies introductory to the Scriptures found the seasonings of men concerning the Creator, the Bible, and Man's origin, largely negative in value. On the other hand, the Holy Scriptures claim to be the repository of positive truth, divinely inspired. To receive their testimony is to enter a direct road to knowledge independent of rational thought; one requiring, however, the rigid exclusion of human philosophies and speculations, for

"God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain."

The necessity for this course becomes obvious from the opening page of the Bible, for its account of man's creation is diametrically opposed to the popularly accepted Evolution theory. There can be no compromise. We who accept the Bible as God's inspired Word must follow the principle expressed by St. Paul: "Let God be true though every man be false" (Rom. 3:4, R.S.V.). We reject, further, the modern well-meaning effort to reconcile the Bible and evolutionary biology, by an allegorizing of the Edenic story. No writer of true history would mix plain matter of fact with allegory in the same continued narrative, without some intimation of a transition from one to the other. If the man Adam be accounted allegorical, so must be the woman Eve; and so the garden, the trees, the rivers, the animals, etc. Continuing up the scale of creation, we must allegorize the earth and the heaven -- thus reaching an obviously absurd conclusion. This attempted interpretation solves no problem, and we are brought back to the inescapable choice-- man is either a fortuitous development from lowly protoplasm, or originally a perfect and direct creation of divine fiat.

God says: "I have made the earth and created man upon it." - Isaiah 45:12.

The Genesis account specifically states -- "In the image of God created he him." And this thought of man's original perfection of being, is borne out by the context, which declares that God looked upon his creature with approval, seeing him to be "very good." It is borne out also by the general testimony of Scripture respecting God as a Master workman -- "His work *is perfect*" (Deut. 32:4). It is borne out by the statement of the Psalmist, "Thou madest him [man, Adam] a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and with honor [his moral likeness to his Creator]; thou didst set him over the works of thy hands" -- the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, and the fowl of heaven--"and didst make him ruler over them all" -- giving to man the dominion of the earth, with its lower orders of creation, in the likeness of God's dominion over heavenly things (Ps. 8:6, 7). It is borne out again by the statement of the Wise Man, that God made man *upright*, but he sought out many inventions and *defiled himself*. - Eccl. 7:29.

Furthermore, Adam is termed a "son of God" (Luke 3:38); an expression Scripturally restricted to angelic beings, to Jesus, and to his footstep followers, justified through faith and led of God's spirit.

Additionally, the historicalness of the account of Adam and Eve is attested to by Jesus, who quoted from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 in these words "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh?" - Matthew 19:4, 5.

Finally, there are the multitudinous references from Genesis to Revelation to the pivotal truth of all Scripture -- *the redemptive* sacrifice of Christ -- a doctrine positively confirming Adam's original perfection and subsequent "fall."

We conclude therefore, that the record concerning the first man and woman is neither allegory nor fable, but a literal, historical fact set forth and emphasized through figures of speech to intensify its truthful realities.

THE DIVINE COMMAND

Following the account of Adam's creation, the narrative continues:

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.... And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." - Genesis 2:8, 9, 16, 17.

We note the simple facts: the provisions of a loving Creator for his noble creature's welfare in trees of life -- bearing fruit suitable to the perpetuation of human life; the forbiddance (probably temporary only) of but one tree; and the extremeness of the penalty. Before the perfect man is now set a test of obedience.

We are to think of Adam as perfect in the sense of being mentally and morally fashioned after the likeness of the Creator -- well poised, well balanced -- not prone to sin "as the sparks fly upward," as he subsequently became, and as the children now are. We are not, however, to think of him as perfect in knowledge or in character. Knowledge must be acquired, but he was fully equipped with all the mental and moral apparatus for a rapid acquirement of knowledge. As for character, in an intelligent being it is a fixity of the will; and such a fixity can come only with knowledge. In other words, the perfect Adam was ready to acquire perfect knowledge, and had a perfect Creator, able and willing to give him the requisite instruction; and as this right instruction would be received, and this perfect knowledge be attained, character (good or bad) would be established -- either in favor of the principles of righteousness already established by God, or in opposition to the will of God, in unrighteousness.

We are not to think of Adam's condition and trial as an experiment on God's part, the result of which would be doubtful; but, on the contrary, we are to remember that the results were fully known to the Almighty before the trial began, and that he saw the end of his work from the beginning (Acts 15:18), else he would never have undertaken it. Divine foreknowledge is conceded by a large proportion of professing Christians who, nevertheless, are sadly confused by certain false theories which imply that the Almighty's foreknowledge was to the effect that the vast majority of the posterity of Adam would spend an eternity in most horrible suffering, and that God prepared the arrangement for their suffering in advance of their creation. This view is untenable among those who combine any measure of knowledge of God's character with any measure of reasoning ability. The Scriptures show conclusively that God had a much more just,

reasonable, and loving plan than that -- that he foresaw beneficent results before creating our first parents.

There are two methods of giving and receiving instruction. One through precept and example; the other through experience. Man was not the first of the intelligent creatures -previously God had created many higher orders - angels, cherubim, principalities, and powers (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 3:10, etc.). These had all been instructed by good *precepts*; they had not had instruction through *example*, except on the side of good example: they had no illustration of evil and its pernicious consequences. That they antedated man is revealed in the remarkable words addressed to job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . When the *morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*" (Job 38:4-7). These celestial spectators beheld with wonder and praise the operation of divine wisdom and power in the work of the creative "days." But the angelic host did not know that upon this planet was to unfold a mighty drama which would reveal for all eternity two other wonderful attributes of God -- justice and love. For the divine purpose was to bring into being a new order of creature -- humanity -- whose instruction, it was forearranged, should be along the lines of *experience*, which would add to the instruction of God's angelic creatures by way of giving them an example of sin and its consequences, and of the divine attitude toward sin and toward sinners. The permission of evil -- its eventual removal and the means used thereto -- constitutes the great theme of the Bible.*

* See our free booklet, "Why Does God Permit Evil?"

When God's wonderful Plan of the Ages is understood, everything in nature and in experience bears testimony to the overruling of his providence. The heavens declare his glory and the earth showeth his handiwork -- all speak of an intelligent designer, wisely adapting means to good and benevolent ends, and ministering to the necessities of his intelligent creatures. Every leaf and every sunbeam bears to the thoughtful a loving message of divine care. And every inharmony of nature, when viewed in the light of God's plan, is seen to be but a part of that great process whereby God is preparing for the perfect order of things which shall continue forever, when sin and its entailments shall have been banished under the successful reign of Christ; and even the long permitted wrath of man and Satan will eventually be to God's praise.

Therefore, in considering Adam's trial, we first observe that since God is good, all his providences must be with a view to wise and benevolent ends, either near or remote; and secondly, that since he made man in his own image -- morally free -- and with the alternatives of good and evil before him, it would be contrary to his purpose, thus manifested, to so hedge him about with his providences as to interfere with his moral free-agency, which is the crowning glory of humanity, and the right exercise of which gives to virtue all its worth.

DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS PENALTY

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, bath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." - Genesis 3:1-6.

The characters in this high tragedy are all worthy the grandeur of the occasion. They are Jehovah; a fallen rebel of the spiritual universe; and man, an earthly image of God. The test -- act of the occasion, too -- however men of low conceptions have sneered at it -- was equal to the character of the parties in grandeur and dignity. It was indeed the simple taste of fruit; but that tasting an act of deliberate disobedience to Him whose law is perfect.

It is with no cloudy vagueness that the personal existence of the spirit of evil is revealed in Holy Scripture. In history, prophecy, and in parable is the Tempter brought before us, and every quality, every action, every attribute which can indicate personality, is referred to him in language which cannot be explained away. The records of the old dispensation and the writings of the new, alike depict him as preeminent in power among the angels who lost their first estate (Jude 6), and as ever compassing the destruction of men. As God is called "the holy one," so Satan is called "the evil one." He is the oldest sinner (1 John 3:8); the greatest sinner (Eph. 6:12); and the father of sin (John 8:44). In 2 Corinthians 11:3, St. Paul gives us a plain, historic version of the beguiling of Eve; and in Revelation 12:9, we read of the great dragon, "that old serpent, the devil and Satan." We, then, are neither wise nor prudent to talk of allegories, or rhetorical personification, or in bolder unbelief to doubt or deny the existence and the power of the chief of fallen spirits. It were far wiser to recognize our foe, and to seek the strength with which to contend with him.

The fact of original sin presents nothing strange, nothing obscure; it consists essentially in disobedience to the will of God, which will is the moral law for man. This disobedience, the sin of Adam, is an act committed everywhere and every day, arising from the same causes, marked by the same characters, and attended by the same consequences as Holy Scripture assigns to it. It is the way of man -- from God to self and independence. There is first the subtle questioning of God's love; the suggestion that his commandment is merely arbitrary, imposed by power. Love being doubted, truth is next assailed and God is treated as a liar. God's love and truth being denied, the next step is to take his place openly. God has quite lost his character in the heart of man, and self now seeks to be "as God." Thus is spiritual perception destroyed when God is doubted.

St. Paul declares that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). Mother Eve's involvement in transgression was wholly apart from her husband's knowledge or complicity; and he, when he learned of her course, was so full of sympathy and so full of love for her, that his affection quite overcame his proper sense of duty toward God. Concluding that his wife's disobedience had forfeited her life, and that the result to him would mean everlasting loss of her companionship, he deliberately chose to be with his companion in sin rather than to be separated from her: therefore he ate knowingly, to share her penalty -- he suicided. He chose the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore.

"Unto Adam the Lord God said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, *till thou return unto the ground; for out of it vast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*" - Genesis 3:17-19.

Here in direct and forceful simplicity the penalty for disobedience to God is stated to be a return to the previous condition of nonexistence. In the words of Paul: "The wages of sin is death." And again: "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by [as a result of] sin:

and so death passed upon all men, in that all are sinners [inheritors of their father Adam's blemishes]." - Romans 6:23; Rom. 5:12, 19.

How strange it seems that this simple Genesis narrative, which contains not a word respecting eternal torment, should be made the basis of all the fears which have tormented millions of Christian believers respecting a future of unutterable woe entailed upon Father Adam, and through him upon his race. How simple the statement of the Lord respecting what the penalty would *be* -- *death*; margin, "dying thou shalt die." How fully this is in agreement with the experiences which have been upon the race for now six thousand years -- dying they have died to the number of something like twenty thousand millions. We would not make light of the original sin; we would have it appear in its full force as a deliberate, willful disobedience of the divine command; and yet we assert with all confidence that no reasonable mind can find anything in this language indicating eternal torment as being the wages of sin. How could any reasonable mind admit that if eternal torment had been threatened it would have been a *just* penalty for the crime mentioned -- disobedience in the eating of forbidden fruit?

If to some it may at first appear that death is not a severe sentence, not a manifestation of divine wrath, not a curse, let them reflect further. Let them note how all of the dying processes are only parts of death, and that as insane asylums mark those who become mentally dead before they are physically dead; and as hospitals mark those who become physically decrepit before they are mentally decrepit; and as prisons mark those who become morally dead or decrepit before they are physically dead; so all of the experiences of our race, "groaning and travailing in pain together," mark "death working in us." All sicknesses, pains, and sorrows are parts of the dying process in the human family. The "curse" or sentence of death has resulted in blighted hopes and loves and ambitions, and is rapidly placing the entire race in the great prison house of death -- the grave. Surely, the true penalty of sin was a heavy one, though we must admit it was a just one. Surely, it involved all of the race of Adam in the most natural manner, because all of his children are partakers of his sentence; because sharers in his weaknesses, his imperfection, resulting from his transgression of the divine law. How unutterably tragic the lot of the human race if this present life were their only and final portion. Thank God for the golden promise of the Holy Scriptures -- a glorious restitution age under the reign of Messiah -- a promise summed up in the Apostle's words in 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22.

"For since by man death,
By man also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die,
Even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

- *W. J. Siekman*

(The subject of the fifth article in this series will be: "*Where Are the Dead?*")

God's Strength Made Perfect in Weakness

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." - 2 Corinthians 12:9

THE words of our text were spoken to the Apostle Paul by his resurrected Lord. As all will remember, they came to him in response to his urgent, thrice-repeated prayer.

This personal lesson followed directly the teaching with which he had begun his first letter to Corinth: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. . . . He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." -1 Corinthians 1:27-31.

Using himself as an example, Paul was illustrating one rule of God's dealings with men, the paradox of strength in weakness. He wrote that it had been said of him, "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." The Apostle responded: "Of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh. . . . For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me ... for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 10:10; 12:5-10). God's strength is made perfect in weakness! Thus, he deals daily in the impossible.

When God wants to do something with his people he starts with the impossible. He promised Abraham a son. Then, He waited until Sarah was past the age of childbearing before fulfilling the promise. Having graduated from his training in the courts of Egypt Moses thought he was ready to help his people. His attempt to fight for them ended in ignominious flight and an obscure exile among Jethro's sheep. Forty years of loneliness and unlearning passed before God called him. He had lost his court polish. "I am not eloquent," he pleaded. Then God, by means of Moses, freed Israel. When Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist, were there no younger women in Israel? Of course, there were. But how could they experientially know the depth of their need for God's power to bear a child, especially the one of whom Jesus was to say: "Among those that are born of women there bath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). So God did the impossible. It cannot be stated often enough, God has chosen "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence; --" that our only boast can be of God. - 1 Cor. 1:21, 27-31.

That Joseph should be the son of an obscure shepherd in Canaan before he became the governor in Egypt was not improbable enough. He had first to become a slave and a slave in prison before his condition was impossible enough for God to lift him up to rulership. Jesus did not wait till Lazarus was sick to cure him; he tarried until Lazarus was dead and buried before acting! God did not use Saul the Pharisee, student of Gamaliel, officer of the temple; instead, he took the blind Paul and made him his emissary to governors, kings, and the imperial household in Rome. When Samuel went to anoint a king of Jesse's sons, God passed over all the mature men of the house and took the youngest, a musician, a poet, a shepherd, and transformed him into the greatest war leader Israel ever had. Before Samson wrought havoc on the Philistines he was ensnared by a

woman, shorn, chained to a mill, and blinded. *Then*, he pulled down Dagon's house of worship. It was only "when Pharaoh drew nigh" that Moses said, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." - Exodus 14:10, 13, 21.

"WAIT MY SOUL UPON THE LORD"

The key to God's perfect strength in us is found precisely in that statement, "Stand still." So long as our "ceaseless struggling after life" continues, God waits. Perhaps the hardest lesson in the school of Christ is found here: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). God takes the nothings of this world to make into the somethings in his world. It "pleases" God to use the weak, foolish, base, despised of this world, not so that these can boast but so that all boasting is excluded. Only such "zeros" can know intimately, from personal experience, that they can do nothing alone. Only by knowing this experientially and acting on that knowledge can they do the impossible.

Take the case of God's strange command to Moses: "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you . . . then thou shalt say unto Aaron, take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh." So Pharaoh's magicians and Aaron "cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (Exod. 7:9-12). It was only a rod, a dry piece of wood, "as a root out of a dry ground . . . no form nor comeliness" (Isa. 53:2). Aaron picked up that rod and it remained dry, detached from its root and dead. Years later in the wilderness he laid the same dead rod before the tabernacle of witness. "And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." - Numbers 17:8.

Only a dry rod, but laid on the altar of God, it blossomed and brought forth fruit. Only a persecutor of Christians, blinded and kneeling in the dusty road to Damascus but he carried God's message to governors and kings and into the imperial household of Rome. Only the poor, base, nobodies of this world, but touched by divine fire they make everything else become meaningless, nothingness, tasteless, and flat.

"I will make the place of my feet glorious," saith the Lord (Isa. 60:13). What a pity that so few of us are content to *remain* at the place of his feet. Israel's first king Saul had once known the beauty of God's feet. He wandered away never to return to that place. Even Abraham once wandered from the place of blessing. A famine made him go down to Egypt: A famine in the land for Abraham; the weight of kingship for Saul and the very means which brought them to their high destinies, high callings, were abandoned, by Abraham temporarily, by Saul forever. They turned to the arm of flesh.

"The arm of flesh will fail you, you dare not trust your own." Never was this law more clearly seen than in the contrasting lives of Saul and David. At no time were spirit and flesh more in contrast than on that fateful day when the big boaster from Gath strode up and down the narrow strip of land which lay between the armies of Israel and Philistia. No man dared to cross that fearful no-man's-land; but a mere stripling, an unknown youth, did. He wore no armor that day. None that human eyes could see. No more than human eyes could see the beauty of that One they esteemed "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted" (Isa. 53:4). No more than natural eyes can see the glories of the place of God's feet. But David knew the armor he wore that day. He had tried it. It had borne the test. It was proved in conflict. He had proven it experientially. And he said so speaking of Saul's royal armor: "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them." Instead "he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook ... and his sling was in his hand." - 1 Samuel 17:39, 40.

"THE LORD AT THY RIGHT HAND"

He scarcely seemed a man, so young he looked, as he walked beyond the army of Israel into the "no man's land" which separated the two armies. His brother's words still rang in the ears of the Israelites: "Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" Eliab thought he had fled his shepherding to be a spectator of the battle. How little he knew! Even David had not known where the simple errand on which he had been sent, would lead. "Take now for thy brethren," Jesse had said, "an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves and run to the camp to thy brethren; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain. . . ." It had begun as an ordinary, colorless, almost routine errand; a small chore. How seldom do we see God's hand in the ordinary service calls.

Both armies watched as he walked out onto the strip which the giant from Gath had dominated for forty days. "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together." Each day that challenge had been flung in the teeth of God's people. Every day the Philistines rejoiced more and Israel was more cast down. "Give me a man," and now a boy stepped out.

"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" David asked. Almost before he knew it, he had found himself walking out between the armies, with no other man except the Philistine giant. Only a boy, a few stones, a staff, a sling, but these came near the giant, "in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel." He was God's champion and he needed no more. " . . . I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear . . ." "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

"Who is this lad?" asked Saul of Abner, and Abner could not answer. "Enquire thou whose son the stripling is." Samuel could have said, "Saul, this unknown stripling is God's champion. A greater man than you because no task is too humble for him, because, unlike you, he does not trust in swords and spears, but in God."

What if David had scorned the servant's task Jesse sent him on? He had not known God's plans the day he had left his "few sheep in the wilderness." No mighty goal could be discerned by the young man as he drove the cart of parched wheat, bread, and cheese. He could have reasoned very plausibly that this was no service for God as he carried the supplies to the quartermaster. It was a slave's task, and he had been anointed the future king of Israel by Samuel. But, had he not gone on this menial service, he would never have "slain his ten thousands."

"THE LORD IS WITH ME"

Having carried out that task, failure was still possible. When David had heard the Philistine boast and cried out against the giant, men reported his daring words to the king. Saul sent for him. What a disappointment to find the author of these brave words only a boy, a stripling. Learning his name was only an afterthought for Saul. "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine . . . thou art but a youth."

"The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine," replied David.

"Go, and the Lord be with thee," said Saul. Did he hypocritically think they were sending him to death? or did he dimly remember a young man who was once, like this lad, "little in his own

eyes"? Did he recall the experience of having God's hand upon him in the baggage among the asses? If so, the memory had lost all meaning. Saul weighed him down with his own armor, his helmet of brass, his coat of mail. But David would not go out against the giant so poorly protected!

"I cannot go with these . . . I have not proved them. And David put them off him." He had proved God. God had been put to the test against the lion and the bear. Now it was in the name of the God whom Goliath had defied that he went. "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David" (1 Sam. 17:50). No iron sword. What a fall there is when one exchanges the sword of the spirit for one of iron!

At least two things were necessary for David's impossible victory. He had to faithfully discharge small duties which seemed to have little significance for God's service. He had to take the name of God with him, not the means of men.

God had anointed him while he was a shepherd and he was content to do God's service as a shepherd until God called him away from the sheep to become Israel's greatest king. The success or failure of each of his steps to the end of his days was to depend upon his remaining "in the condition in which he was called." The Scriptures are filled with this theme. It is a reflection of the paradox of strength in weakness, of how God works among men. The measure of our zeal, love, courage, devotion, faith, sacrifice, willingness to serve is not to be found in great trials, temptations, or crises, alone. For the vast majority, for almost all the members of his church, the measure of our devotion to God will be found in much humbler things. It is in the common life lived uncommonly, that we best display the mercies of him who has called us.

To be continued

- L. Iannaccone

"The Way, the Truth, the Life"

Christ said, "I am the true and living way."
And mortal man, from Paradise debarred,
(Where once was open intercourse with God),
When strongly stirred by yearnings deep within
To throw off tyranny of deep-rooted sin
And win his way back to his lost estate,
Finds Cherubim still posted at the gate
Upholding God's just claims of righteousness --
Demanding purity, not taking less.
Turned back, beat down, undone, in measure short,
Still yearning to true righteousness comport,
Learns God, Himself, has filled his every need.
So loved the world He gave His Son to bleed
In sacrifice that man might now make bold
Into the holiest of all. For Jesus told
"I am the Way."

"I am the Truth"; and most exact is truth.
And man, bewildered by conflicting claims
Of various schools of thought which but defame
The God of Truth -- with this bewildered mind
Turns to God's Word, if haply he may find"
"Thy Word is truth," as Jesus said of it.
Finds to know truth, himself he must submit
To being freed from all false estimate
Of wealth, of world; and self must dedicate
To do the will of Him, whose doctrines may
Be known to only those who will obey.
For, searching truth in deep sincerity,
He finds it more than mere philosophy.
A revelation comes by which he's led
To take up cross and follow Him who said,
"I am the Truth."

"I am the Life." And what a boon is life!
Yet man, subject to vanity, can know
But death; corroding sin has made him rue
The day of birth so oft as he is brought
To grief by sin's mad tyranny. Though fought
Against with tears and agonizing cry,
In faintness hears the stern "Who sins must die!"
What hope is there? Must death forever be
The wage of sin through all eternity?
Yes. But praise God! eternity is ours,
Who, laying hold in faith on promised powers,
Receive from the ascended Lord the gift
Of spirit new-a power that can rift
The gates of death, and quicken us to be
Alive in Him, who showed at Bethany
"That He is Life.

Christ said, "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.
And we, no longer barred from Eden's bowers,
In Him have heritage so high it towers
E'en higher yet than mind can now conceive.
What wonder, then, but that small flock receives
An entrance into Kingdom so divine.
Self dead, and seeking daily to define
Our faith in outward conduct, we become,
By grace, joint-heirs with Him who is the sum
Of all God's fulness -- kings and priests to be
Unto our God for all humanity.
Redeemed from every tongue and every race,
Though raised so high by wondrous sovereign grace,
We'll join with all creation to acclaim
All honor to the One 'who once became
"The Way, the Truth, the Life."

- Frederick A. Essler

"Have Faith in God"

THE LESSON of faith, to those who have become the Lord's consecrated people, is not merely faith in doctrines and theories, nor, indeed, chiefly this faith. The chief feature of faith is confidence in God; that what He has promised He is able and willing to fulfill. This faith grasps not only the things to come, but also the things present; this faith rejoices not only in the glory that shall be revealed, but rejoices also in the sufferings and trials and difficulties and all the rich experiences which an all-wise Father sees best to permit. Let us therefore, as the Apostle exhorts, rejoice evermore, "in everything giving thanks." - 1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20.

The best illustrations of this true faith, this continuous confidence **in God**, is found, as Ave should expect, in our dear Redeemer's experiences and their narrative. Realizing that He was in the world for the purpose of serving the divine plan, He realized also continually the supervision of divine wisdom in respect to all His affairs: consequently He not only went to the Father frequently in prayer, and went to the Word of the Lord for guidance, but every experience through which He passed, and all the opposition with which He met, He recognized as being under the divine supervision. He knew that He was fully consecrated to the Father, and seeking not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him; He knew consequently that the Father's providential care was superintending all the affairs of His life.

This is forcibly illustrated in His answer to Pilate; when the latter said to Him, Knowest thou not that I have power either to deliver Thee or to put Thee to death? Jesus answered, "Thou couldst have no power, except it were given thee of My Father." Again He said, with respect to the cup of suffering and ignominy, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Indeed, it was sufficient for Him in any and every matter to realize that the Father was controlling: this thought gave Him courage to do, to suffer, and to bear.

And similar confidence in divine Providence is necessary to all who would come off conquerors through Him who loved us and died for us. If we can feel sure that we have fully surrendered ourselves to God according to His call, we may also feel sure that all things are working for our **good**: we may realize in every emergency of life that the Father has prepared the cup, and will sustain and bless us while we drink it: our Lord Jesus, the Father's; representative, oversees our trials and ignominy and suffering; He permits the cup to be prepared for us by blinded servants of Satan. This knowledge should not only enable us to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods (anything that we deemed precious, trade, influence, good name, etc.), but should enable us also to entreat with kindness and gentleness, and with a spirit of forgiveness those who prepare and administer the cup of our sufferings. But none can have this confidence of faith-none should have it-except one certain, particular class; and it is not a large class as compared to the world, but a "little flock"-those who have believed in the precious blood unto justification and who have, as members of the Body of Christ, consecrated themselves unreservedly to walk in their Redeemer's footsteps, to suffer with Him, and to be finally glorified together with Him.

"What is Faith's Foundation Strong?"

In our text, after the Apostle has urged us to be "content with such things as ye have," he adds the reason or ground upon which this advice is given, saying, "For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Yes, this is the true ground of contentment, the realization of the Lord's care, and that the Lord's wisdom and grace are being exercised towards us,-and that such things as He grants are the things which are best for us, and which we would choose for ourselves, if we had sufficient wisdom and insight into all the circumstances of the case.

The Apostle adds, "So then we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The whole world has wondered at the intelligent courage of the humble ones of the Lord's people. The secret of their courage and of their strength- is in their confidence that the Lord is their helper, that He, with wisdom and love which are infinite, is both able and willing to make all things work together for their good.

Possibly some may be inclined to wonder why so much attention has been given in these columns of late to themes similar to the one here discussed, and kindred topics calculated to develop more and more the spirit of love and the various fruits of that spirit, and to counteract the spirit of selfishness, and the evil fruits of that spirit. We answer, it is because we believe these lessons to be specially opportune at the present time. The Lord, by His grace, has removed many blinding errors from our minds, and given us clearer insight of His glorious plans, and revealed to us His glorious character in connection with His Plan; and there has perhaps been more or less danger, that in such a study of theology the real object of all this knowledge, the object of the Gospel, may be lost sight of. It is not God's object to merely find an intellectual people, nor to instruct a people with reference to His plans, but to sanctify a people with the truth, and thus to make them "meet [fit] for the inheritance of the saints in light." We are of the opinion that the testings which the Lord designs for His people are not merely doctrinal tests, and consequently we expect, more and more, that the harvest siftings and separations amongst those who come to a knowledge of the truth, will be considerably along the lines of character, and of the fruits of the spirit.

The Lord's final decision is not, If you be ignorant of certain things you are none of mine; nor, If you have certain knowledge you are mine; but, "If any man have not the Spirit [disposition, mind] of Christ, he is none of His." And if we are right in this, dear readers, it is of paramount importance that we, as soldiers of the cross, put on not only the intellectual covering, the helmet of salvation, but also the heart covering, love of righteousness and truth and goodness and purity, with the shield of faith. The breastplate of righteousness will be found to be one of the most important pieces of armor in the battle which is upon us, and respecting which time are told that thousands shall fall at our side. - Psa. 91:7; Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:11.

Not only so, but we believe that the lesson foregoing is of great importance, because the time is short; and those of the Lord's people who do not soon start to cultivate a spirit of contentment and thankfulness will not only not be fit for the Kingdom, but will as sharers of the world's spirit of discontent be in sore distress with the -world very shortly, in the great time of trouble. Contentment and the faith which it implies, are necessary to godliness: and whoever is attempting godliness without striving for cultivation of contentment will surely make a failure of it. Godliness and the fruits of the spirit, meekness, patience, gentleness, longsuffering, brotherly-kindness, love, will not grow in the garden of the soul, where the weeds of discontent are permitted to sap the strength and vitiate the air with their noxious presence and influence.

The sentiment of one of our precious hymns is quite to the point, and we desire, for ourselves and for all of the Lord's people, that condition of faith and consecration and contentment which will permit us to sing from the heart, with the spirit and with the understanding also, the words: --

"Content with beholding His face,
My all to His pleasure resigned,
No changes of season or place
Can make any change in my mind.
While blest with the sense of His love
A palace a toy would appear,
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus still dwelt with me there."

Who can tell that the Lord may not ultimately put some such tests to us, as these mentioned by the poet which were applied to himself and to others of the faithful in the past? Let us remember that we will not be faithful in large things unless we have learned to be faithful in little things. Let each, therefore, begin, and faithfully continue, a transformation of his life along these lines of godliness with contentment in the most trifling affairs of life. He will thus not only be making himself and others the happier in the present time, but he will be preparing himself for greater trials and tests that the Lord may be pleased to impose later, to prove to what extent we are overcomers of the world and of its spirit.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith;" because faith lies at the foundation of all loyalty to God and His cause. Faith in the divine supervision of all our affairs not only gives peace and content, but it saps the root of all selfish ambitions and vain gloryings and boastings; because of our faith in the Lord's Word, that "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." Faith in the Lord's supervision prefers the Lord's arrangement to any other as respects the sufferings of this present time and the glory that is to follow; and hence it doth not puff up but builds up in the character likeness of our Redeemer.-
The Watch Tower.

Rest

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

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

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

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

- Gertrude W. Seibert.

The Question Box

Question:

John 12:31, 32 (King James Version) reads:

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

According to at least seven translations, verse 32 reads "when I am lifted up," in place of the words "if I be lifted up," and the best Greek texts show that the word "men" is not in the original Greek.

May we not understand by this that the drawing was consummated by the cross and that it involved not merely men but the drawing of *all things* to himself--to his possession (Psalm 2:8, Matt. 11:27); an Adamic world purchase -- dispossessing Satan of his possession (Matt. 4:9), rather than as a drawing to salvation which is the exclusive work of the Father during the Gospel Age (John 6:44)? Jesus well said with the cross in view "Now is there a judging (crisis or decisive moment) of this world." "Now the prince (or ruler) of this world shall he cast out." (Cast out by the judgment or decision of the cross as to who is the rightful ruler-who shall possess this world.)

Answer:

In their translations we find that some scholars retain "if" and some "when." Weymouth, who retains "if" in the text, gives "when" in the margin. It is the same word as in John 14:3 ("If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again"). Here also Weymouth retains "if" in the text and "when" in the margin. However, in a footnote he points out that "the 'if' does not indicate any uncertainty."

Again, as all may see for themselves, the word "men" is shown, in the King James Version, in italics which indicates that there is no corresponding word in the Greek. It has been supplied by the English translators.

We would agree, then, that there could be no valid objection to a translation reading: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself."

Next we inquire: Does the word "all" refer to mankind, or to things, or to both mankind and things? We reply: According to our understanding of the passage it refers to mankind. It is mankind who are to be *drawn*. This word "drawn" could hardly be used, appropriately, of inanimate things. Inanimate things might be drawn, indeed, by a rope, or by a steam engine -- never by the cords of love.

However, it is true that when the whole race of mankind has been drawn to Christ and fully restored, such restitution will be accompanied by the "restitution of all things." The whole earth will then be as was the Garden of Eden. - Acts 3:21; Eph. 1:14; Isa. 60:13; Isa. 66:1; Isa. 51:3.

Again, in the question, reference is made to John 6:44 and the point made that the drawing of men to salvation during the Gospel Age is the exclusive work of the Father. With this we agree. However, we think the drawing, by Jesus, mentioned in John 12:32 relates not to the Gospel Age but to the Millennial Age.

It is a rewarding study to note the relationship which this text (bears to its context. It is part of a brief summary of the Gospel which our Lord gave his disciples just two days before his crucifixion, immediately following his interview with certain well disposed Greeks (John 12:20).

This Gospel summary continued with *a parable* about a corn of wheat which, unless it die, must abide alone, but which, if it were to die, would bring forth much fruit; -- a parable which, he well knew, could find its fulfillment and which he was determined should find its fulfillment only in himself (John 12:24).

It included also *a paradox* about losing one's life to save it, which his disciples were to understand was to apply to them, as well as to him, if after Pentecost they would, in very truth, be his followers (John 12:25).

This Gospel summary continued with *a promise* -- nay, a double promise: Part (1) "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am *there shall also my servant be*"; Part (2) "If any man serve me, *him will my rather honor*" (John 12:26).

And then, to parable, paradox and promise he adds the remarkable *prediction* found in the two verses quoted at the head of this "Question Box" (John 12:31,32). These verses form, moreover, not a single prophecy but a four-fold prediction.

(1) The words predict, first of all, his death on the cross, as St. John himself observes: "This he [Jesus] said, signifying by what manner of death' he should die" (verse 33)

(2) Nor was it only his crucifixion the words foretold. Behind and beyond that shameful elevation he saw a glorious ascension into heaven. Literally rendered, his words would read, not when I am lifted up "from" the earth, but when I am lifted up "out of or "above" the earth. The Diaglott renders the words: "And I, if I be raised on high from the earth, will draw all to myself;" and in this peculiar phrase, whatever its first intention may have been, most expositors find a reference to his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to the right hand of God, as well as to the special manner of the death by which he was to glorify God.

(3) Next our Lord proceeds to tell the results of his death and of his triumph over death, the results of his being lifted up "from" the earth and of his being lifted up "but of" and beyond the earth.

One result, he tells us, will be that he will draw all men unto himself -- all men, that is to say, without distinction of race -- both the Jews who had rejected him and the Gentiles who are ignorant of him. And what could have seemed more improbable, more incredible than that? Who but he could have seen that his crucifixion would start a religious revolution which would spread throughout the world and lift and bind its scattered and hostile races into one new and perfect manhood? For two thousand years the whole course of history had been against any such idea. Through all those centuries God had had an elect people to whom, and to whom exclusively, he had confined the direct and immediate disclosures of his will. Was this divine (procedure to be changed all in a moment? Could it be that the unique grace so long shown to the Jews was now to be extended to all mankind? True, God had elected Israel only that Israel might 'be his minister to mankind, but in the pride of its election Israel had long forgotten the end for which it was elected.

Well, the divine procedure was, indeed, to be changed, although not all in a moment. First would come the call of the Church, which would occupy a brief space (two thousand years as we count time but only a couple of days from God's standpoint) During that period the Father would draw

to Jesus those who would constitute his Bride. Then, with her at his side, Jesus would proceed, through the Millennial Age, to draw all men to himself.

(4) Even yet, however, we have not exhausted this marvelous prediction-have not followed it out to its full scope. For, just as behind the death of the cross Jesus saw the resurrection and ascension into heaven, so behind and beyond the call of the Gospel Age Church, and after his own "drawing" power had been exercised during the Millennial Age, he foresaw and foretold the final triumph of good over evil.

Part of our question may be condensed, as follows: May we not understand that Satan, the prince or ruler of this world, is to be cast out, as the result of the judgment or decision of the cross; that is to say, cast out from such rulership? To this we reply: Yes, that is the proper thought; that is precisely what we are to understand from this passage.

In this connection, notice especially the force of solemn and picturesque phrase: "The prince of this world shall be *cast out*." Our Lord who before had seen Satan fall like, lightning from *heaven* now predicts that he is to be cast out from the *earth*. And this phrase "cast out" is every suggestive, for it is the technical phrase for excommunication, for the solemn and formal expulsion of one who has sinned against the light of a synagogue, a temple of any holy place or community. To affirm, therefore, that Satan is to be cast out of the world implies that he has no right in it. *It implies that the world is (or is to become) a holy place* -- (may God hasten the day), a place sanctified by the divine presence, and therefore a place for which Satan is unfit, in which his presence is a usurpation and an offence, from which he is to be solemnly and forever expelled.

As yet, indeed, we see not that he has been expelled from the world or even from the Church. But he who came to destroy the works of the devil, he who is able to measure all spiritual forces with a precision to, which we cannot pretend, and to calculate the issue between good and evil with an infallible prescience-he it is who here assures us that as the result of his coming into the world, his death for the world's sin, and his judgment or rule of the world, the power of evil is to be broken, that the supreme representative of evil is, to be overcome, dethroned, driven out. He pronounces the issue certain, however long the conflict, the campaign, may last. He affirms that the temple of the world (God give us faith to believe that this world is yet to be a temple) is to be purged from whatsoever offendeth, or loveth or maketh a lie. The prince of this world has been judged, self judged and self-condemned, in that he stirred up men to reject their wisest and best, set himself and tempted- them to set themselves against the supreme revelation of the righteousness and love of God. Sentence has gone forth against him, and in due time that sentence will infallibly be carried out. Oh! it is a great promise, alive with the inspirations of courage and hope, and may well nerve us to carry on the conflict with evil in ourselves and in the world around us, which often looks so hopeless that we grow weary and faint in our, minds. Failure is impossible, however imminent it may seem. Victory is certain, however improbable it may appear, however distant it may be.

But though he is to displace the prince of this world, our Lord will not be, as the Jews expected him to be, only another and a better prince of this world. He is to be lifted up, lifted out of and above the world. To him the elevation of the cross, the throne of love, is but an emblem of his elevation to heaven, the throne of power. From thence he will *draw* men -- draw them by the sweet and healthful influences, by the gentle compulsions of the love he has shown for them and revealed to them, until at last they shall all come to him -- all, that is to say, who do not willfully resist him, and be changed into his image, clothed with righteousness, crowned with the glory and honor of perfection; some, the Church, to share even in his nature and throne; all to partake of eternal life, made possible through his sacrifice.

The scope, then, of this prediction is very wide. It is charged with the music of a hope that reaches beyond this present life. It presses on through century after century, unfulfilled or fulfilled only in part, and will never tire nor rest until it shall close in the complete fulfillment of a redeemed race, dwelling in an earth from which the curse has been removed. It conducts us from the travail of the cross to that supreme moment when, seated on the throne of universal dominion, Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, when, having subdued all things unto himself, he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God even the Father, that God may be all in all.

- *P. L. Read*

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