

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## The Broken Body and Shed Blood

*"My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." - John 6:55.*

BY THE Lord's instructions many memorials were instituted by the Jews: the "manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant" kept in the ark; the "two stones upon the shoulder pieces of the ephod to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel"; fringes on the garments of the children of Israel that they might "remember all the commandments and do them"; the censers of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram "made beaten plates for a covering of the altar ... to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, to the end that no stranger, that is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to burn incense before Jehovah," etc., all of which interest us for their historical value and the spiritual lessons that may be drawn from them; but the one from which we have received our greatest inspiration, and the one that was used by our blessed Master himself as a basis for his parting message, is that of the Passover Supper. With the lamb of this celebration Jesus identifies himself. The cup which the Jews called the cup of blessing" he takes as a symbol of his shed blood, but for that purpose blessed anew; and the unleavened bread a symbol of his broken body.

Going back to the type we see the blood-sprinkled lintels and doorposts, for God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The night had come for Israel's departure from Egypt. The judgment of God was upon the land and was to be executed. The angel of death was to pass through and "smite all the first born; but provision had been made for the safety of God's chosen - "The blood shall be to you a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you." What cause for peace, consolation, assurance in these words! While they were spoken to the children of Israel still in Egypt, they come to the child of God still in the "land of the enemy with added force.

There are two aspects in which we may view the 'paschal lamb; first, as the ground of peace; and second, as the centre of unity. The blood on the lintels secured peace. Nothing more was required. It was not a question of good works or of merit. It was a question of the Israelite having faith to believe what God had said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you," and to act upon that faith. So with the believer today. It is not because of any inherent goodness or merit that he finds peace with God, but because of simple faith in the power of Jesus' blood to cleanse from sin, for

"though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," when once the blood is applied.

The second aspect of the Passover, that of Christ as the center of our unity, was pictured in the assembly of Israel gathered in peaceful and holy fellowship, partaking of the lamb. Being saved by the blood was one thing, but being gathered round the lamb was quite another. The blood of the lamb however formed the foundation for both. Just so in Christian experience. Apart from the atonement of Christ there can be no peace with God and no fellowship either with God or with his people. It is to a living Christ in heaven that believers are gathered by the holy spirit, to a Living Head; "He is our center. Having found peace through his blood, we own him as our grand gathering point. The holy spirit is the only gatherer; Christ himself is the only object to which we are gathered. The holy spirit can gather only to Christ. It cannot gather to a system, a name, a doctrine, or set of doctrines. It gathers to a Person, and that Person is a glorified Christ in heaven."

It is our understanding that it was in the evening of the 14th of Nisan, that is, what we today call the evening of the previous day, that Jesus ate his last passover with his disciples, and following it instituted "the Lord's Supper," a memorial of his death,\* and, as Paul adds, our communion, a partnership in his body and blood, saying: "Does not the consecrated cup which we bless mean that in drinking it we share in the blood of Christ? Does not the bread which we break mean that in eating it we share in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body, for we all share in one loaf." - *E. J. Goodspeed*.

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\* According to the Jewish reckoning, to be celebrated this year after sundown of Friday, April 5.

As the literal lamb gave strength to the Jews, so we must feed on the mystical Lamb, by faith accept the merit of his sacrifice that we may be ready for our deliverance in the morning of the new dispensation. Our bread, the Apostle Paul calls "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." To eat that bread means much more than would appear to a careless examiner. Eating and drinking manifestly indicates our acceptance, not merely intellectually, but our acceptance, as a moral power for our transformation into his likeness, for the putting on of Christ, the mind of Christ, by the renewing of our minds. Drinking the cup signifies that we have accepted Jesus as our life-giver, and that our utter dependence is on him; also, that we have made a covenant to go into death with 'him. By the eating of the flesh we covenant to "suffer with him," and to conduct ourselves as become members in, sharers in, the "body of Christ."

The eating of bitter herbs with the Pascal Lamb in symbolism speaks of cheerful endurance (translated "patience" in the New Testament) of those experiences that are necessary for the testing of every prospective sharer with him in the bounties of the Promised Land -- experiences that justly try us "in all points," that there may be assurance that throughout eternity there will be no unwillingness to fully and joyfully enter into every plan of the heavenly Father for us. From this proclamation of our desire to "suffer with him" in whatever way the loving Father shall permit, as pilgrims and strangers, far from the land of 'his promise and our choice, we go forth with staff in hand and girt for the journey, carrying our bread with us, and, too often, wandering long in the wilderness state before finally home is reached. In the typical wandering those who could not in faith accept joyfully, uncomplainingly, the trying experiences of the wilderness, found in it their burial place. The fact that only two of the adults who partook of the lamb and who left Egypt for the promised land reached it, causes us to pause and consider as to whether we too might not "eat unworthily" of our Passover Lamb. It was not lack of knowledge, but an "evil heart of *unbelief*" that caused their bodies to fall in the wilderness. Let us "take heed, brethren,

lest haply there shall be in any one of us an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God; but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any of us be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: *for* we are become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence unto the end." (Heb. 3:12-14.) According to the next chapter, "The word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard." They and that faith, as it were, did not become so inseparably united as to become one. Their trial is past and "Failure" written in their record; but faith in the antitypical Lamb, which was prefigured in their yearly memorial that was instituted at their entrance into the wilderness, inspired the Apostle many generations later to write, "And so all Israel shall be saved." Out -of their ruin that One who will save will erect a memorial which for eternity will proclaim that the God of justice is also a God of love, wisdom, and power.

With the One who died as the sacrificial Lamb will be 144,000, who like Caleb and Joshua saw their enemies, giants in the land so great that the other spies said, "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Also like the two spies, this faithful company not only see the fruit of the land, but *have faith* in the One who promised.

As one of the innumerable things provided by our heavenly Guardian that the 144,000 might pass safely through their wilderness experiences was the Memorial Supper which our Savior instituted on the last night of his life, building on the foundation of the yearly Passover celebration and as a substitute for it. "Do this," he said, "in remembrance of me." "Take, eat; this is my body." It did appropriately represent him, for it was unleavened bread. "The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." Therefore he could say, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." "If any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever." (John 6:33, 35, 51.) (The Revelator tells of a great company who did not have this satisfaction, but promises for them a future in which they "shall hunger and thirst *no more*.") The partaking of the unleavened bread at the Memorial Supper means to us primarily that we appropriate by faith the perfect human life which Jesus laid down, accept the restitution rights and privileges which Jesus' death made secure for Adam and all his race.

### **"IF WE BE DEAD WITH HIM"**

Very clearly the Apostle Paul indicates that in the Memorial Supper we not only yearly commemorate the death of the Savior of the world, but also proclaim our privilege of being "dead with him": "I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say, The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf. Matthew Henry comments on this passage:

"By partaking of one broken loaf, the emblem of our Savior's broken body.... we coalesce into one body, become members of him and one another.' Those who truly partake by faith, have this communion with Christ, and one another: and those who eat the outward elements, make profession of having, this communion of belonging to God, and the blessed fraternity of his people and worshipers," thus accepting all whom the Lord hath set "in the body as it hath pleased him."

"It will help us to see the connection of thought here to remember that the words translated 'communion' in this verse (1 Cor. 10:16), 'partakers,' (ver. 18), and 'fellowship' (ver. 20), are all forms of the same Greek word. This word means communion, association, fellowship; and the genitive after it may denote either the persons or things with which one is associated, or that in

which they are associated and have part together. Now if we examine the argument, we find that it is here the fellowship or association with the blood and body of Christ that is meant. In the second analogy used, the Israelites, by eating the sacrifices, are represented as partaking with the altar-i.e., as consuming one part, while the altar consumes the other part of the sacrifices. And in the conclusion, those who eat the idol-sacrifices are represented in the same way, as in fellowship with demons. So that here, in the other analogy of the Lord's Supper, it must be fellowship with some thing or person that will keep up the correspondence between all the cases, that forms the basis of the argument. ' Some suppose that the fellowship is with believers and in the body of Christ. But this supposes that the point of the argument-viz., that with which we are associated in the Supper, is left out by Paul. Moreover, in the parallel cases, it is not the association with the worshipers, but with the object of worship, that is pointed out. The consistency of the several parts of the argument requires, therefore, that we understand here fellowship with the blood of Christ to be meant. But in what sense? It is evident from the passages (Matt. 26:26 seq., 1 Cor. 11:23 seq., John 6:51 seq.), which give the history and explanation of the Lord's Supper, that these -symbols represent the sacrificial death of Christ, and that, therefore, fellowship with the body and blood of Christ,, is fellowship with the Lord in his death. The partaking of these emblems brings us into this fellowship. But as the emblems are symbols, not the real body and blood of the Lord, so our eating and drinking are symbolic acts, representing the faith by which this fellowship is really accomplished. - Cf. John 6:51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, with ver. 35, 40, 47." - American Commentary.

The above seems to us to corroborate what we find on page R5342 of the Reprints:

"There is a difference, we believe, maintained in the Scriptures between the bread, which symbolizes the Lord's flesh, and the wine, which symbolizes his blood. The Church, in order to be accepted of the Lord as members of his glorified body, must share in both of these by participation. The loaf, as the Apostle explains, not only represents to us our Lord, as the Bread of Life necessary for us, but it also represents us as his members to be broken as our Lord was broken; and the wine represents not only our Lord's blood, but also the blood of the Church that we are sharers with him in his sacrificial sufferings. - 1 Cor. 10:16,17.

"The privilege of sharing our Lord's cup is not for -the world. They will not share in the sufferings of Christ, because all opportunity to share in his sufferings and glory will have ended when the Church is glorified. The Lord said, 'Drink ye all of it'-drink it all. There will be none for the world to drink. And we who are of the Church class 'fill up that which is [left] behind of the afflictions of Christ.' - Col. 1:24."

Shortly before instituting the Memorial Supper the Master offered his intercessory prayer for all who should be of his body, "That they all may be one," "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." (John 17; 20,21.) This can have reference only to the oneness of spirit that Paul "begs" us to be "eager to maintain, the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," that we may "lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love." (Eph. 4:1-3.) If an honest desire for such a unity is not in the heart of one who partakes of the Lord's Supper, he at least has failed to note the way in which the Lord has associated-the two thoughts. "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body as well as the blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.' For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment upon himself." - 1 Cor. 11:27-29.

## **WHO MAY PARTAKE?**

The answer of inspiration is that no one should partake unworthily. In this the Apostle was not forgetting that "there is none righteous, no not one"; but he is remembering that "we are acceptable in the Beloved," and only by faith can we be "accepted" "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God." "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup." (1 Cor 11:29.) "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith," or apparently more exactly: Examinee yourselves, to 'see whether you are holding 'to your faith. "Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? -unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Cor. 13:5, R.S.V.) "If we say we have fellowship with him [in the bread, or in the cup, or in any way] while we walk in darkness, we lie and do' not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all ,sin." - 1 John 1:6,7, R.S.V.

It was immediately following the institution of the Memorial that Jesus warned Peter: "Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat," and added the consolation: "But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." This was said to the weak, impetuous Peter, who thought he was able to follow the Lord into any experience. But instead Jesus told him: "The cock will not crow, till you have denied me thrice." Perhaps it was in part for us that Peter was permitted so drastic a demonstration of his weakness, and for us, as well as for him, that the very next words recorded are: "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God; believe also in .me" - the God whose "mercy endureth forever," and the Son, "who ever liveth to make intercession for us." - John 13:38; 14:1; Heb. 7:25.

In the words of another:

"Beloved brethren, let us 'meditate on these things.' We have tasted, through grace, the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus; as such it is our privilege to feed upon his adorable Person and delight ourselves in his unsearchable riches'; to have fellowship in his sufferings and be made conformable to his death. Oh! let us, therefore, be seen with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, the girded loins, the shoes, and staff. In a word, let us be marked as a holy people, a crucified people, a watchful and diligent people -a people manifestly 'on our way to God' -- on our way to glory -- 'bound for the Kingdom.' May God grant us to enter into the depth and power of all these things; so that they may not be mere theories, in our intellects -- mere principles of Scriptural knowledge and interpretation; but living, divine realities,. known by experience, and exhibited in the life, to the glory of God."

- *P E Thomson.*

## RESURRECTION

*"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." - Acts 24:15.*

RESURRECTION! What a word! What a power of suggestion it contains! It has the aroma of spring. It tells us that the winter is gone; the cold snows have melted away, the time for the singing of birds has come, and the flowers appear in the land. Resurrection! The trees seem to whisper it, the streams to be purring it, the sun to be smiling it, and the world to be welcoming it. Everything appears to be rejoicing in the power of returning life.

God need not have made the spring-time, but in his loving kindness he has given it once a year. We know it is coming. How eagerly we look for the first robin. Ah, there he is, just as joy-giving as ever. He is reconnoitering -- just taking a look over the land. He will be settling down to the business of house-keeping ere long. And there is the purple violet nodding its head. Everywhere nature is waking up from its long sleep. The world is enjoying its awakening to life. And it is all due to the fact that the sun is higher in the sky. Its rays are coming more directly, less obliquely, and they gain power as it mounts still higher. Trees, grass, flowers, and the brown earth itself, are all bathed in the ardent, bountiful, life-giving solar light and warmth. Germination is going on. There is a mighty process of transformation taking place on every hand. This all preaches the yearly sermon of the world's great need, for above all else men need the great Sun of Righteousness to arise with healing in his beams. Nor shall they seek him in vain, for in due time he will disperse the long night of sin, sorrow, and death, and death shall be no more.

### THE EVER-REPEATED QUESTION

"If a man die, shall he live again?" is a question asked by Job a long time ago, and has been asked many times since. Science has no answer for this question. The Platonic philosophy claims that man does not actually die, but is immortal, and that death is but a semblance of dissolution, or a something that affects merely the body, while an ethereal part called the spirit lives on. In the words of the poet it says, "There is no death; what seems so is transition. This life of mortal breath is but a portal of the life Elysian, whose portal we call death." Much of the world's theology runs in this same channel. But God's Word states: "They are all of the dust. and all return to dust again." It is very important to see death to be what it is, and then we are prepared to consider the great change that is to come to a dying world.

When Jesus was on earth, Israelites of Pharisaic persuasion believed in a resurrection. Referring to her brother Lazarus, Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection and the life [it is through me that the resurrection will come]. He that believeth in me, though he were dead [in the past] yet shall he live [in the future], and whosoever liveth [at that time] and believeth in me shall never die." Thus the Master directed attention to the one means of gaining life.

In order to secure for the world a resurrection, Jesus had to die and rise again. His own resurrection was the first great requirement. While his death seemed to be the greatest possible overthrow of a cause, his resurrection revealed the greatest triumph. He had promised to rise again, but in the main this had gone over the heads of the disciples. So he convinced them by appearing to them. It was an amazing revelation. He was alive. Death had no more dominion over him, and now he possessed the power to open the tomb and to release from death; he had the keys. So the Apostle wrote "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them

that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits afterward they that are Christ's at his coming [presence]. Then cometh the end, . . . when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:20-26.) In the glorious hope of a resurrection, millions have lived and died.

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?" said the angel at the tomb. Why, indeed? And as the Master of life is not numbered among the dead, neither is the doctrine of the resurrection, in its full scope and power, to be found in the tomb of musty and stale theological treatises, or in creed graves. Yet it lives in all its strength and beauty in the Word of God. But the smoke of false creeds has obscured it from the eyes of the great majority, for they have failed to see that the mighty promises of Holy Writ apply to all mankind. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." - Hosea 13:14.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they [the heavens] shall hear [have communication with] the earth [the earthly representatives of the heavenly Kingdom]; and the earth shall bear the corn, and the wine, and the oil [the people symbolized by corn, wine and oil]; and they shall bear Jezreel [the lowest part of the world's inhabitants, who so greatly need the uplifting influences of the Kingdom]." - Hosea 2:21, 22.

### **IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST**

During the present Age some have been regarded as already risen with the Master. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1.) To be risen with Christ means to have an entirely new viewpoint of life and its affairs. The great struggle for existence on earth encourages the growth of human ambition. It is a saying that "there is always room at the top." Young people are encouraged to acquire knowledge that they may thus rise to the summit; of human achievement, and perchance have their names on the world's roll of fame. But Christ calls to something very different, something higher. It is to have our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And so we are to seek the things above. Then on the other side of the veil we shall have fellowship with God's people throughout eternity. All the things for which our hearts yearn are stored up for us in that celestial realm, and some day we shall, if faithful, share in the first resurrection. - See Phil. 3:10, 11.

### **ALL IN THEIR GRAVES SHALL ARISE**

When all in their graves shall arise, then comes the process of the general resurrection for the members of the human race; and what this will mean for the hundreds of millions who have died, no words can express. It will be the regaining of life under entirely new conditions. We recall a great writer's description of the death of a young girl, little Nell, who was taken from her friends and borne to the cold tomb. Now, because of the redemption in Christ, we can visualize little Nell alive once more. It is the great morning of the resurrection. The world's long night is gone. The effulgent Sun of Peace is risen and his glory is diffused upon human hearts and minds.

And where are those who formerly traveled over life's wintry way? And where is Nell? She is alive. No mere semblance of life is that, but life itself. It shows in her sprightly step and in her sparkling eye. The rose has come back to her cheeks and buoyancy to her form. The grave which held her for a season, has no more claim upon her. She carries not the slightest suggestion of death's power. She is the same sweet Nell as of old, but with added grace and freshness due to

recently imparted vigor of life and joy. Her former companions are there too, and she finds her friends of former days. Trees, flowers, and grass clothe the earth that was parched, and the warbling birds sang never so blithly as now.

The great congested cities are gone. The hovels of poverty are no more. People have congenial employment. No one is in want. The earth is bringing forth its increase, and injurious insects and weeds have been destroyed. Forces of nature no longer run riot, and the air is balmy and invigorating. Men and women -- thousands of them -- have already come back from the tomb and millions more will return in due time as the redeemed earth is made ready to receive them. Social inequalities have melted away, for the only aristocracy is that of character. There are no extremes of riches and poverty; money is a thing of the past. There is no racial friction or strife, no war in all the world. The people are characterized by a wonderful simplicity of manner and of dress; their faces bear the stamp of honesty of purpose. Everything speaks of life and testifies to the operation of a power hitherto unknown.

It is the evening hour. The declining sun tints the cloud-flecked sky with a glory past description, and a few birds are giving out their farewell notes to the departing day. Here we sit in a kind of natural amphitheatre, formed by gigantic trees. It is a goodly place, affording a grand, panoramic view of earth and sky. All is quiet, and the gentle murmuring of some meandering stream is a delight to the ear. It is a spot that invites us to tarry, while the magic of approaching darkness weaves deeper shadows under the umbrageous branches of the monarchs of the wood. And while the silken fingers of the softly vagrant breeze fondles our cheek, we listen to the "stilly sounds that come with eve" that whisper of a world at peace.

"Groves were God's first temples," and men and women are coming to join in the evening hour of worship. Joy is on every countenance. And over there where a strata of protruding rock forms a natural rostrum, one of venerable aspect speaks to the assembled participants. He discourses on the goodness of God, and tells us that he lived on earth a long time ago, and we learn that his name is Daniel, the beloved Prophet to whom the promise was made that in the end of the days, he would come forth to stand among his people; and we remember him as one who was faithful to the Lord in a wicked and idolatrous world.

We listen as Daniel reminds his hearers that their presence there evidences the fact that the promises of God are sure. It has all come to pass because God so loved the world that he sent his Son from heavenly glory to a sin-cursed earth to die on man's behalf. By the resurrection of Jesus he gave assurance that some day the power of death would be broken, and now that glorious time has come at last. He further reminds them that their present blessings are but a foretaste of the blessings held out in the prospect of everlasting life, promised to those who learn to know their God. And having concluded his discourse, he mingles with the throng.

The wonderful resurrection work goes on. The Son of love gives the fulness of his splendor to mankind. And the divine music of peace, joy, kindness and good-will, coming down to earth from above, will flow on and on in a mighty tide of benediction to the hearts and minds of uncounted millions of the human race. So let it be, O, Lord: Thy Kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen.

- *Walter Sargeant.*



## **What Say the Scriptures?** **Basic Bible Studies No. 5 - Where Are the Dead?**

*"All go unto one place." - Ecclesiastes 3:20.*

THE preceding Scripture study ascertained that the first perfect man Adam by disobedience to the Divine command forfeited his right to life and entailed upon himself and his race the penalty of death, for by reason of inherited weaknesses "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The truth of this Scripture statement is demonstrated by the inability of any one to fully obey the Decalogue of Mt. Sinai -- the Divine Law which measures a perfect man's ability and right to eternal life. Says the Apostle: We know that "all that the Law says is addressed to those who are living subject to the Law, in order that every mouth may be silenced, and that the whole world may await sentence from God. For no man living will be declared righteous before him on the ground of obedience to Law. Law simply brings a knowledge of sin." Hence "There is not one intelligent, not one seeker after God. All have turned aside; they have alike become worthless; there is no one who does good-no, not one." - Romans 3:19, 20, 10-12, *Weymouth*.

This universal judgment should not cause us to resentfully conclude that God is unrighteous in bringing the human race into existence only to remand them to death. Life, even under present circumstances is a precious gift from the Creator, who has, further, given Scripture assurance that humanity's experiences are objectively disciplinary and destined for eventual and eternal blessing. Our later study in the philosophy of the ransom-sacrifice will disclose marvelous wisdom in the Divine inclusion of all mankind in Adam's sentence. For the present, let us note this whisper of hope: "The creation was made subject to frailty (not voluntarily, but by Him who placed it under); in hope that even the creation itself will be emancipated from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." - Romans 8:20, 21, *Diaglott*.

In these words we glimpse God's Love in a promise for the future, though as yet "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18) in the "covering cast over all people" (Isa. 25:7). For human beings are dying, and dying at the appalling rate of 100,000 every day, with billions already entered into the tomb!

"All that tread  
The globe are but a handful to the tribes  
That slumber in its bosom."

How unutterably tragic is death with its legacy of tears and broken hearts! Friends, relatives, loved ones -- where are they now? Through the ages this ever present question has occupied the minds of the world's greatest thinkers. Let us note their conclusions before considering the true answer of the Scriptures.

## THE STATE OF THE DEAD

Atheism answers: "There is no God. The Universe is a fortuitous agglomeration of atoms, and mankind but a strange 'disease' in one corner of it. Death is merciful extinction; oblivion, the destiny of all."

Agnosticism answers: "We do not know. By his very nature man is incapable of forming trustworthy conclusions concerning ultimate reality. Knowledge of reality is therefore a huge indemonstrable assumption. There may be a God and there may be none: there may be a hereafter and there may be none."

Science answers: "Our knowledge is based on the accurate experimental evaluation of physical phenomena. We find the human body to be composed of the chemical elements found in the earth, built up into innumerable and highly complex living cells. Substantially the same type of organism is possessed by the lesser creatures; man differing in his larger and finer-structured brain and greater reasoning capacity. We know nothing of the life principle which animates him. There is no evidence of any inner non-physical entity that might survive death -- the dissolution of the body elements."

Philosophy in general answers: "The brief and disordered limitations of the present life are incompatible with the inherent capabilities of a being such as man with his fine sensibilities, great intellectual powers, and remarkable moral sense. Reason concludes that such a superior being must have a greater destiny in some future state. But where this future state will be, and whether it is attained at the moment of death or after an interval, we do not know."

Catholicism (Greek and Roman) answers: "All men possess immortal souls. All who die outside the pale of our church are doomed to an eternity of conscious and horrible torment. Members of our church who die endure a purgatorial experience for an allotted time; after which they enter the realms of eternal joy."

Protestantism answers: "Consciousness does not end with death. He who believes in Jesus Christ will at death go immediately to heavenly bliss. All unbelievers go to a hell of eternal torment."

It were a wearisome task to list the answers of Spiritism, Theosophy, Swedenborgianism, Christian Science, Rosicrucianism, Mohammedanism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and other religions and religious philosophies. All however, have this in common -- a belief that in one state or another there is *survival and consciousness after death*.

As we turn to seek from the Scriptures an answer to our question, we do well to heed Professor Young's admonitory words in the Commentary to his Literal Translation of the Bible: "The Bible is not a difficult book; the subjects it treats of are, in some respects, 'hard to be understood,' but the language in which they are expressed is generally -- it might be said uniformly-simple. The danger lies in attaching to the simple words of Scripture meanings which they *might, could, would, or should* have, and of straining the meaning to the utmost extent of which the words are capable. Starting with preconceived notions, formed it may be insensibly, the words are tortured to support them. . . . The plain grammatical and historical interpretation is the only clue out of this labyrinth. It is the only certain plan, as it is the easiest. The question is not -- What *may* this teach? but -- What *does* it teach?"

These are sound words from a famous Bible scholar. Let us therefore divest ourselves of human preconceptions, and rigidly excluding personal bias, analytically examine the Bible's teaching concerning the present state of the dead, commencing with a reexamination of man's nature.

## **THE NATURE OF MAN**

What is Man, this strange creature that God has called into being? In contemplative awe the Psalmist speaks thus:

I praise thee for the awful wonder of my birth;  
thy work is wonderful.  
For thou didst form my being,  
didst weave me in my mother's womb.  
Thou knewest all about my soul,  
my body was no mystery to thee,  
as I was being molded secretly  
and put together in the world below;  
All the days of my life were foreseen by thee,  
set down within thy book;  
Ere ever they took shape, they were assigned me,  
ere ever one of them was mine.  
O God, what mysteries I find in thee!  
How vast the number of thy purposes!  
I try to count them? -- they are more than the sand;  
I wake from my reverie, and I am still lost in thee.

From Moffatt's beautiful translation of these verses from Psalm 139 we turn to a much earlier Scripture. In Genesis 2:7, we read:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

This is the record of Inspiration. To it all subsequent Scripture, and all human reasonings, must conform. We note the simple facts:

a - Dust plus breath equals *a living soul*.

b - Man *has a* body; man *has a* breath of life; man *becomes* (not *has*) a living soul.

Analyzing and expanding this Scripture, we have:

1 - "The Lord God formed [cut out, carved, fashioned] man of the dust [elements] of the ground,"

The account describes the body as formed first. The wonderful organism was as yet unanimated. It had eyes, but saw nothing; ears, but heard nothing; a mouth, but spoke nothing; a tongue, but no taste; nostrils, but no sense of smell; a heart, but it pulsated not; blood, but it was cold, lifeless; lungs, but they moved not. It was not a man, but a corpse.

2-"and breathed [Heb. *naphach* - inflated, blew] into his nostrils the breath [Heb. *neshamah* - wind] of life [Heb. *caiyah* - lives, plural - i.e., such as was common to all living animals];"

The second step in the creative process was to give vitality to the properly prepared body; and this is described by the words, "blew into his nostrils the breath of life." When a healthy person has been drowned, and animation is wholly suspended, resuscitation has been effected by working the arms and thus the lungs as a bellows, and so gradually establishing the breath in the nostrils. In Adam's case it of course required no labored effort on the part of the Creator to cause the perfect organism to breathe the life-giving oxygen of the atmosphere.

3 - "and man *became* a living soul [Heb. *nephesh* - a breathing creature; i.e., a sentient being]."

As the vitalizing breath entered, the lungs expanded, the blood corpuscles were oxygenized and passed to the heart, which in turn propelled it to every part of the body, awakening all the prepared, but hitherto dormant, nerves to sensation and energy. In an instant the energy reached the brain, and thought, perception, reasoning, looking, touching, smelling, feeling, and tasting commenced. That which was a lifeless human *organism* had become *a man*, a sentient being: the "living soul" condition mentioned in the text had been reached. In other words the term "living soul" means neither more nor less than the term "sentient being"; i.e., a being capable of sensation, perception, thought.

It is not generally known that the Scriptures speak of "souls" in connection with the lower animals. They, as well as man, are sentient beings or creatures of intelligence, only of lower orders. They, as well as man, can see, hear, feel, taste, and smell; and each can reason, up to the standard of his organism, though none as abstrusely nor on as high a plane as man. In the first, second, and ninth chapters of Genesis the term, "living soul" (*nephesh*) is applied in the Hebrew language to the lower animals nine times, but the translators of our English Bible (as though careful to protect the false but common vagary of an immortal soul, derived from Platonic philosophy) have used other expressions, so that the reader is kept in ignorance of this fact. We cite some examples:

"God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving [creeping] creature *that hath life* [Heb., *nephesh* - *soul*]" (Gen. 1:20). This was on the fifth creative day, or period, long before man's creation.

"God created great sea-monsters, and every living creature [Heb., *nephesh* - living *soul*] that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly" (Gen. 1:21). This also was in the fifth "day"-before man's creation. These were *fish souls*.

"God said, Let the earth bring forth the living *creature* [Heb., *nephesh* - living *soul*] after his kind -- cattle and creeping thing and beast" (Gen. 1:24). These were dry-land souls, higher than the fishes; but man, human soul or being, had not yet been created.

"And God said ... To every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is *life* [living *soul* - *nephesh*] I have given every green herb for meat" - Genesis 1:30.

"Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; . . . and whatever Adam called every living *creature* [Heb., living *soul* - *nephesh*], that was the name thereof." - Genesis 2:19.

## **MORTALITY AND IMMORTALITY**

Having Scripturally determined that man does not *possess a* soul, but *is a* soul (sentient being) in common with the lower creatures, let us examine some associated terms upon which much misconception exists. Two of these are *mortality* and *immortality*. The general definition of mortal is *dying*; and of immortal, *everlasting*, but both are incorrect from a Scriptural standpoint as is obvious when they are applied to answer the simple question -- Was Adam created mortal or immortal?

If the answer be that he was created *mortal* (*dying*, according to the erroneous common definition) we inquire, How could God sentence him to death if he were already *a dying* creature and never had been otherwise? And if created *dying*, how could the Apostle (Rom. 5:12) declare that Adam's death came by his sin?

If the answer be that he was created *immortal* (*everlasting*, according to the erroneous common definition), we inquire, How then was he threatened with, and afterward sentenced to, death; and how could he die if he were death-proof? and why the necessity of depriving him of access to the trees of life, lest he *eat and live forever?* - Genesis 3:22.

It should be obvious that these two terms are incorrectly defined; and we submit the following as the true definitions

*Immortal* (literally, *not mortal*) -- the state or condition in which *death is impossible* -- a death proof, incorruptible, indestructible, imperishable condition. Any being whose existence

is dependent upon a source of life from without himself, is not immortal. Consequently immortality is not a quality possessed by men, angels, archangels, or even the Son of God, before and during the time he "was made flesh and dwelt among us." This quality inheres in God alone, as it is written: "The Father hath life in *himself*" (John 5:26); i.e., his existence is not a derived, nor a sustained one. He is "the King eternal, *immortal*, invisible" (1 Tim. 1:17). "He *only* hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16) as an innate or original quality of being. (This last Scripture may be held to apply to our Lord Jesus Christ in his present "highly exalted" condition, "the express image of the Father's person," with the Father excepted in all comparisons according to the rule of interpretation laid down by the same writer in 1 Cor. 15:27.)

*Mortal* -- signifies *die-able*, a state or condition in which death is possible if the elements sustaining life are withdrawn. One possessing mortality possesses life dependent upon God for its continuance. Men are *mortal*, for in God (in his providence) "they live and move and have their being." Likewise the angelic host, who, though *mortal*, are enjoying life-everlasting. Satan, also an angel, is *mortal*, and it is distinctly declared that in due time he will be destroyed (Heb. 2:14). Adam was created *mortal* -- *in a condition in which death was a possibility, or everlasting life a possibility*; according as he pleased or displeased the Creator. Had he remained obedient he would have continued living until now -- and forever -- and yet all the time he would have been *mortal*, liable to death if disobedient.

The theological doctrine of an "immortal," "never-dying," or "ever-living soul" (expressions found nowhere in the Hebrew, Greek, or English Scriptures), is a unique example of an opinion destitute of any foundation in the Bible, and in fact contradicting it, yet held firmly by large numbers of educated and intelligent Christians on the mistaken supposition that it is taught therein. This error, so prolific of many others, is directly traceable to Grecian philosophy, particularly Plato's "sublimest hallucination" -- the immortality of the soul -- which as part of the

good man's lofty moral teaching, when the early Christian Church became enamored of this world, passed easily and imperceptibly into Christian Theology, molding its phraseology and thought about the future punishment of sin. This unconscious engrafting on the teachings of the Bible has been a source of endless confusion, which persists even to our own day in the consideration of Death, and Hell, the place of the dead.

## **DEATH AND HELL**

Adam was the first to incur death. To him it was plainly stated: "In the day that thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die. . . . thou shalt return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 2:17; 3:19). Adam disobeyed, he was deprived of the life-sustaining fruits, the dying process commenced, and after 930 years he died, "in the day" of his disobedience, within the 1000-year "day" of the Lord. (See 2 Pet. 3:8.) The animating breath of life being withdrawn, the body organism disintegrated into "dust," and Adam, as a sentient being or soul ceased to exist. There is not the slightest suggestion in the sacred record that he continued to exist in some other state, much less that he was subjected to horrible torments. St. Paul plainly declares, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Death according to the Bible is purely and simply "cessation of life." Life is existence -- death is non-existence. To reason otherwise is to perpetuate the original Satanic lie: "Ye shall not surely die."

The doctrine of eternal torment, which crept into the Church with the falling away from Apostolic teaching, gained much force from the time when men tortured others for what they called heresies. The word "hell" became associated with this terrible theory as the place of torment, where fireproof demons were supposed to torture for ever and ever those who were consigned thither by God. This is by no means, however, the original meaning of the word "hell." Originally it meant a "hidden" or "covered" place and was, therefore, a proper translation of the Hebrew *sheol* and the Greek *hades*; equivalent terms which in the Bible denote all the graves in the world viewed as one, i.e., Gravedom, the dominion of death. In other words, oblivion, the death state, in which all the dead, good and bad, are at rest. It is very important that we should realize that there is no thought of eternal torment in the Bible use of the words, "sheol" and "hades."

In this connection, it is interesting to read Archbishop Whateley's words:

"It must be allowed to be strange that the word 'sleep' should so often be applied to the condition of the departed if they are in a state of as lively consciousness and sensibility as before death, and in actual perception of more unmixed pleasure or pain."

Also those of Dr. Weymouth (translator of the New Testament in Modern Speech):

"My mind fails to conceive a grosser misrepresentation of language than when the five or six strongest words which the Greek tongue possesses, signifying 'destroy' or 'destruction,' are explained to mean maintaining an everlasting but wretched existence."

We cite some Scriptures which positively and directly answer the question, "Where are the Dead?"

"All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." - Eccles. 3:20.

"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." - Psalm 146:4.

"There [in Sheol] the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together. They hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there." - Job 3:17-19.

"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the other." - Eccles. 3:19.

"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing." -Eccles. 9:5.

"There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." - Eccles. 9:10.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." - Eccles. 12:7.

To emphasize these Bible truths we contrast them with the traditions of men

- (1) The Bible says -- In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. - Genesis 2:17.  
Tradition says -- There is no death. - No Scripture.
- (2) The Bible says -- The wages of sin is death - Romans 6:23.  
Tradition says -- The wages of sin is eternal torment. - No Scripture.
- (3) The Bible says -- The soul that sinneth, it shall die. - Ezek. 18:4.  
Tradition says -- The soul is immortal and cannot die. - No Scripture.
- (4) The Bible says -- The King only hath immortality. - 1 Timothy 6:16.  
Tradition says -- All humans are immortal. - No Scripture.
- (5) The Bible says -- Death is extinction of life. - Psalm 146:4.  
Tradition says -- Death is the entrance to a fuller life. - No, Scripture.
- (6) The Bible says -- The dead all go to one place; the grave. - Eccles. 3:20.  
Tradition says -- The dead go to Heaven, Purgatory, Hell, etc. - No Scripture.
- (7) The Bible says -- The dead are asleep. - 1 Thess. 4:13.  
Tradition says -- The dead are awake. - No Scripture.
- (8) The Bible says -- The dead know not any thing. - Eccles. 9:5.  
Tradition says -- The dead know more than the living. - No Scripture.

We therefore conclude this study with the conviction that the teaching of the Scriptures is that *the dead are dead*; are in a state of complete nonexistence, of cessation of being, of oblivion. And such is to be their eternal state except as we shall find hope in the Scriptures of a resurrection from the dead. That this is exactly the wonderful hope the Bible holds forth for all mankind, our succeeding studies will reveal, for it is centered in Him who gave himself a ransom for all, and who has said:

*"Marvel not at this; for an hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice, AND SHALL COME FORTH."*

- *W. J. Siekman*

(The subject of the sixth article in this series will be: *"The Messianic Promise."*)

## God's Method With Men

We may be very confident that we hold the truth; but the surest way to deny its power is to be bitter and unloving toward those who differ with us. Let us remember that Truth is Christ, and Christ is Truth; and that Christ is [the revelation of] God, and God is Love; therefore Truth is Love, and Love is Truth. In proportion as you may hold the Truth, you will become loving toward those who differ with you. All the wrangling, ostensibly for the sake of Truth, which split and divided certain sections of the Church, until men scarcely know where they stand, is evidence that Truth has never been properly understood by them. Truth should not be stored as a commodity or as something of which to boast. While we feel that the teaching of the Word of God is very clear, let us remember that we are only scholars spelling out the alphabet in the school of Jesus Christ. We may rest assured that, in the day when we have full knowledge granted unto us, we shall discover that the men of whom we were the most afraid, have held Truth which we, perchance, have never known. Our duty toward our brother and his toward us, if we be loyal to Christ, is that we love each other still, though we may not agree in all our views. - *Selected*



## The Question Box

*"And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." - Isaiah 19:22-25.*

### *Question:*

*When and how will this prophecy be fulfilled?*

Is the present Middle East conflict related to Bible prophecy?

### *Answer:*

This prophecy makes reference to three countries, namely, Israel, Egypt and Assyria (present-day Iraq). Before considering the question proper, it will be necessary to briefly review the relationship of these three nations to each other; to reflect also on their typical significance. On this passage, Dr. Arthur W. Kac writes instructively as follows:

"To grasp the full significance of the closing passage of this great chapter of Isaiah, one must be acquainted with the history of the Middle East in the centuries before, and at the time of, this recorded prophecy. The Near East, or the Middle East, was the known civilized world of ancient history. On the southwest border of this world was Egypt, while Assyria was situated on the northeast rim of that part of the world. Israel lay between these two great empires. For many centuries that ancient world was dominated either by Egypt or Assyria. Israel's position was that of a buffer state between these two great powers. . . . If Israel favored Egypt she incurred the enmity of Assyria and vice versa. Israel often became a battleground where the two opposing forces of Egypt and Assyria met. This rivalry between Egypt and Assyria never ceased until both were struck down by the rising power of Persia. Now, after some 2,500 years Assyria, Egypt, and Israel, having regained political existence, the ancient rivalry between Egypt and Assyria has reappeared . . . .

"The meaning of the closing portion of Isaiah 19 is, therefore, that this rivalry between Egypt and Iraq, so catastrophic to the whole Middle East, will not cease until both these nations, humbled by many defeats and much suffering, will surrender themselves to Jehovah, the God of Israel. When that day comes there will be a highway between Egypt and Iraq; the two nations will mix and mingle freely and unite as friends instead of being divided as enemies. This newly found friendship and cooperation between Egypt and Iraq will be reinforced by a covenant with Israel, who at that time will be a blessing not only to the Middle East but to the whole world."

In our free booklet *"Israel and the Middle East"* (published in 1967 at the close of the Six-Day War) we endeavored to show:

(1) That God has a Plan for all mankind, and

(2) That God's Plan for Israel is an important feature of God's Plan for all mankind. Israel is the nation it has pleased God to choose. They are his chosen people -chosen not for favoritism, but for service -- to be the channel through whom his blessings are yet destined to flow to all mankind.

Twenty years earlier (in the December 1946 Herald) we noted that:

"As a matter of fact the passage on which our question is based is really only a part of a section of the Book of Isaiah devoted to predictions as to *the final end of all the nations*. Commencing with chapter 13, the Prophet mentions, first, the 'burden' or 'doom' of Babylon (in which is included Assyria, these two kingdoms being viewed as successive stages of one and the same power). Then follow the 'dooms' predicted for Philistia, Moab, and Damascus, leading up to the doom of Egypt, which is portrayed in the chapter to which our question relates. *The section culminates in chapters 24 - 27 in a general summary of judgment, in which the overthrow of the whole earth is predicted and the glory of the ransomed both of Israel and of the nations in the holy mountain of the Lord*. To quote from the last verse of this section:

'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown [God's providences in this work will be as loud and clear as a trumpet voice], and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.'- Isaiah 27:13."

But all this was not predicted to occur in a day. Elsewhere\* we have noted that in the last five chapters of the Book of Revelation, beginning with chapter 18, there are a series of visions which appear to be 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. *Some of the events thus symbolized are scheduled to take place before the fulfillment of Isaiah 19:22-25.*

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\*September - October 1971, *Herald*.

For example:

1. The fall of Babylon - Revelation 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 - Revelation 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 Thessalonians 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 of the veil, the Marriage will occur.

3. The glorious epiphany of Christ *with* his Church - Revelation 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 - Revelation 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 of the veil, directing the victorious Armageddon conflict.*

In our 1946 article, we expressed the thought (without expressing any opinion on the views of some scholars that partial fulfillments have already occurred) that the complete fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 19:22-25 was then still future. Moreover, since this prophecy is closely associated with the time of Jacob's trouble (discussed in the preceding paragraph) the smiting of Egypt, not to mention its subsequent healing, *remains, today, still future.*

*When* in the future will it be? Precisely when, we cannot say. It will be, Isaiah declares, "in that day" - the day long promised - the thousand year day of Christ; more correctly designated the Day of Jehovah.\* It will be early in that day. *How* will the prophecy be fulfilled? We are not sure. *We expect to have a part in both the smiting and the healing of Egypt*, our expectation being based on the promise of our Lord. To the Christian Church the promise of our glorified Lord is: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne"- "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 3:21; 2:26, 27; Ps. 2:8-12). Yes, the nations will be broken to shivers, but not the individuals composing those nations. For, when the iron rod, in his hands and ours (exercised, not from this side but from the other side of the veil), has accomplished the work of destruction, then will the hands that smote be turned to heal, and the people under his guidance and ours, will return to the Lord and he will heal them, giving them beauty for ashes [the beauty of the Resurrection for the ashes of death], the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Jer. 32:22, 23; Hos. 6:1; 14:4; Isa. 2:3).

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\*See "Even at the Doors," Installment No. 8, in March-April 1973 *Herald*.

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Foregoing we have seen that the Book of Isaiah includes a section devoted to predictions as to *the final end of all the nations*. We have seen, too, that whereas most of these nations have disappeared for ever, *never to rise again, this is not to be true of Israel, Egypt, or Assyria. For these three nations, a glorious future is predicted*. There remains, moreover, the symbolical significance to consider. Students of the Scriptures have long recognized that the experiences of natural Israel typified, in many respects, those of spiritual Israel, (the Gospel-Age Church). Here in Isaiah, the position of natural Israel, lying between two hostile powers, is strongly suggestive of the Church of this Gospel Age, in her conflicts with nominal Christianity (Assyria) on the one hand, and the spirit of the world (Egypt) on the other. With her, too, alas, has not the temptation often been strong to enter a forbidden alliance, first with the one and then with the other?

"Isaiah (Isa. 31:1, 3), referring to the great trouble now impending, says, 'Woe unto them that go down to Egypt [to the world] for help [for worldly ideas and plans, and for counsel as to how they should act in the crisis of this great day]; and stay on horses [who endeavor still to ride the old, false doctrinal hobbies], and trust in chariots [worldly organizations] because they are many; and in horsemen [the great leaders in false doctrines] because they are very strong; but who look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord [for the safety and victory in this day of trouble will not be with the multitude]! . . . Now the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand [his power - the power of the truth and other agencies -as he will do shortly], both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is helped [by the powers of Egypt - the world's ideas] shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.'" - S.S. Vol. 3: C316.

### **THE GREAT PYRAMID OF GIZEH**

Before closing our discussion, we ought not to overlook verses 19 and 20 (Isa. 19:19-20). In these verses Isaiah testifies of an altar in the land of Egypt which, he says, shall be for a sign and for a witness there, unto the Lord of Hosts. Unless we greatly err, it relates to the Great Pyramid of Gizeh "in the midst of the land of Egypt" and "at the border thereof." For some years now this pyramid has been "'for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts [a witness to his foreknowledge and his gracious plan of salvation] in the land of Egypt; for they [the Egyptians -- the poor world, during the great time of trouble coming] shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Savior, and a great one; and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt [the world], and the Egyptians shall know the Lord *in that day* [in the Millennial day -- at the close of the time of trouble], and shall do service with sacrifice and oblation: yea, they shall make vows unto the Lord and perform them. But the Lord shall smite Egypt [the world -in the great time of trouble just at hand]. He shall smite and heal it. And they shall return unto the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them' (Isa. 19:19-22)." - S.S. Vol. 3: C317.

- P. L. Read

## 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.  
(Continued from last issue)*

AMOS said: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the Lord took me as I followed the flock . . ." Later, when he sat down to write of his prophetic work, his self-conception was clearly the same: "The words of Amos who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa" (Amos 7:14-15; 1:1). "Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress . . . and the angel of the Lord appeared . . . and said unto him, The Lord is with thee . . ." (Judg. 6:11, 12). So also, it was only after forty years of shepherding had scraped off the polish of Egypt's court that Moses was called by God to glamorous work. The man who said of himself "I am not eloquent," was ready.

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," says God (Isa. 55:8). When he wanted a governor of Egypt he took a slave out of prison. When he wanted a warrior king he took a musical, poetical shepherd. The greatest proof of his love took place on a cross among thieves. When he needed a family in which to place his son, he chose a carpenter's. When Jesus called his disciples, he started with fishermen. By God's law only the weak can be strong.

The strength in weakness way of the Lord is not only evident when he calls his tools. It is present throughout their lives. They must continue to use the common things in his service, even if these are used uncommonly. No more than rams horns, and the walls of Jericho collapsed. Merely pitchers, lights and trumpets, and the Midianites were destroyed. Only the jawbone of an ass and the Philistines fell. An ordinary rod in Moses' hands, yet the Red Sea parted. Two women, Deborah and Jael, with a hammer and tent peg ended twenty years of Sisera's oppression. A stone from a brook and the Philistine army broke. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." - Zech. 4:6.

The means for God's service lie on every side. The trouble is we have not yet learned what it means to commit all our ways to Him, to make our ways conform to his way. His work takes place in the midst of human failure.

What if no earth shattering opportunity ever seems to come our way? What if, unlike David faithfully carrying the wheat, and bread and cheese, it never gives way to fighting giants? What if our lot is as was that of those in Israel who are mentioned in 1 Chronicles 4:23: "the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges"? Ah, if only it might also be said of us: "There they dwelt *with the king for his work.*"

When I was a very young boy I used to think that the words of the hymn, "*Brighten the Corner Where You Are,*" were "*Right in the Corner Where You Are.*" I begin to see it was no great error. It is the only corner we can brighten.

God's work? Cleaning the kitchen floor? The day at the office? Raising children? Repairing the house? Entertaining friends? Singing a song? Can these be service for the King?

## **"THE LORD PRESERVETH THE FAITHFUL"**

The kingdom of God is made up of small things *done in God's way*. Jesus' whole life testifies to this. He could have stilled a tempest every night; instead he picked up children in his arms. He stopped to speak to one woman at Jacob's well. He taught one man who came to him by night. He noticed one woman's touch on the hem of his garment. The gift of a cup of water, he called service. What's the point of the story of the widow's mite-the mite, or the fact that it was all she had?

He was faithful in that which was least. He spent only three and a half of the thirty-three and a half years of his life on the world stage. The other thirty years were spent in Nazareth, a small town of which it was asked: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Whatever our work, wherever we are, God can there be served fully. Let us give him an honest day's work. Only the servant who has been faithful over a few things, will he make a ruler over many things. The less important our condition, the more his glory will appear by contrast. "I will make the place of my feet glorious," said God. It was on the backside of the desert that Moses saw the burning bush. God's strength is made perfect only in our weakness. His glory shines brighter the more insignificant his tools are. What e'er our place, it is not ours alone -if he set us there. The real question is, Can we stop competing with God long enough to let him work in our lives?

"I know the plans which I am planning for you, plans of welfare and not of calamity, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11, Rotherham). Seldom could these words have been more difficult to believe than during the life time of Ezekiel, Jeremiah's contemporary. He lived "among the captives by the river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans." Nebuchadnezzar had taken the city of Jerusalem and he carried away all ... save the poorest sort of the people of the land" (2 Kings 24:12-14). "And the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel, the priest, the son of Buzi ... and the hand of the Lord was there upon him. " - Ezekiel 1:3.

It did not rest lightly upon him, that hand. He had no joyful word to speak. His was the task of transmitting to the captives God's sentence against even the pitiful few who remained, stubborn, stiff-necked to the end. Of Jerusalem he had to say: "Though Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son or daughter: they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezek. 14:20). Only one gleam of hope lightened the dark prophecies of Israel's doom. "Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth . . . and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem . . ." (Ezek. 14:22). Perhaps most painful of all was the thankless task of placing the blame for what had befallen them and what was yet to happen, on the shoulders of Israel. Israel had a habit of not appreciating God's spokesmen, especially when they spoke the truth concerning Israel's failures.

## **"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH"**

Did he dread the times of which he wrote, "Again the word of the Lord came unto me...." It could not have been easy to obey the command: "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations" (Ezek. 16:1, 2). He was used by God not only in his words but also in his actions. On one occasion he was commanded to perform a dumb show. The captives were astonished. Ezekiel, the priest, seemed to have left his senses. Look at him now.

He comes out of his house. On his shoulders are the few goods he carried the weary miles from Jerusalem to Babylon. He is packed up as for moving. But he is a captive, he can not leave. Now

he turns towards a wall. He digs through it. And through all of the digging he ignored the crowd of watching Israelites and digs on. At twilight he is finished. He takes his goods on his shoulders and moves out. Still no word to explain his actions. The next morning he explained to his attentive countrymen who were expecting an announcement that their return was near. "This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity." - Ezekiel 12:7-11.

"This burden," a weight indeed, almost too much for one man to carry; only God's help makes it bearable. Could he ever carry a heavier burden or preach a more eloquent sermon? Difficult as it was to believe, that day did come.

To go home when the day was done must have been a welcome relief for Ezekiel. He could withdraw from the captives. Like so many of God's children he could find rest and comfort here. Here there was quietness and rest for his body at least. Then too, there was his wife, "The desire of his eyes." How many times did he think, "Thank God for her. Without her I couldn't go on. She's the one bright spot in this life."

One day, again the word from God came. We have it as he wrote it and he wrote it as he lived it. No special adjectives for this message. He had been writing about the parable of the boiling pot. It seems almost like an afterthought we read "Also," no other comment. Yet, these were the words "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke ...." A stroke! He who had been a priest and was only a captive far from home. He had so little and that too was to go. Bury the most precious thing in your life. Still God added: "Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shalt thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead .... Without comment Ezekiel related what happened. "So I spoke unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." - Ezekiel 24:15-18.

Where did he get the strength? The prophet's task is never easy. But now, without even his mate to help! And he was forbidden to mourn! Even with God's help it seems incomprehensible. Only the last verse of the chapter casts light on how he could go on. "Thou shalt be a sign unto them and *they shall know that I am the Lord.*" No more eloquent sermon was ever preached by Ezekiel. His example, more than his words, was a means whereby a remnant of his people would know God, and live. Of these God had said: "They shall comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done." - Ezekiel 14:23.

You are "a city that is set on a hill," said Jesus (Matt. 5:14). You are an "epistle . . . known and read of all men," said Paul (2 Cor. 3:2). The verbal testimonies of all the saints alive today cannot witness to God's work as well as this. The light of this spirit more brightly shines in the joyful sacrifice of his saints. You can turn the next dark hour of your life into a glowing testimony to God's power in victory.

- L. Iannaccone

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