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Perfecting of the Saints

"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." - 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13.

SAINTSHIP, despite the beliefs of many, is not conditioned upon being *perfect* in thought, word and deed, but upon covenant relationship with God. Covenant relationship during this age requires faith and sacrifice, made possible by our Redeemer through whose merit our offering is reckoned perfect -- "A living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1). This special covenant class was foreknown in God's purpose, and through the prophet he says, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." - Psalm 50:5.

God does not covenant with sinners (John 9:31). Therefore, before he could enter into a contract with one who is by inheritance a sinner, provision had to be made whereby that one would be considered righteous. That provision was made, and Paul could say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). This does not mean that the one justified has become sinless or could be while operating through his imperfect body. Paul, painfully aware of this fact, tells us that even though his heart's desire was to do that which was right, evil was present with him, and he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Then he gives the answer -- a solution that has comforted the heart of every true believer who, like Paul, is dedicated to the doing of God's will: "I thank God [for deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Rom. 7:24, 25). Thus he shows that it is from the standpoint of his will, his heart's desire, that God judges him, and not by the ability of his flesh.

The Apostle John likewise says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful [having promised] and just [satisfaction for sins having been provided] to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." - 1 John 1:8, 9.

In the light of these statements by Paul and John, how do we interpret our text? Does the imputation of righteousness, which enabled God to bestow on us his spirit, fulfill his purpose

concerning us? No, there could be nothing gained by imputed righteousness as an end in itself. Imputed righteousness is solely for the purpose of enabling us to present ourselves as an acceptable sacrifice, which, when accepted, gives us access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We are obligated to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, and if faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, we are promised a share in his glory and dominion. "If any man will come after me," said Jesus, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "If we suffer [with him], we shall also reign with him." - Matt. 16:24; 2 Tim. 2:12.

It is said of our Lord, who was holy, harmless and undefiled as a man, that he was made perfect through the things he suffered (Heb. 5:8, 9). It is evident therefore, that this perfecting must relate to him as a New Creature, for he was proven perfect as a man. And if suffering was essential to his becoming a merciful high priest in things pertaining to God, it follows that the under-priests must be perfected in like manner. This Christlike development is not a perfecting of their physical bodies but has to do with the development and characteristics of the new creature -- mind, which is to be clothed with the nature of God himself. God's purpose with us is stated in Romans 8:29: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [the Son] might be the firstborn among many brethren." This Scripture signifies far more than a change of nature. It indicates a transformation and development never attained in any other creation; such as could not be attained except by the method God is using.

THE LORD MAKE YOU TO INCREASE

Note that our development is under God's supervision. We are apt to forget this and to take upon ourselves a responsibility we are wholly unable to carry. The Jews under the law were obligated to the keeping of a covenant that would grant life only through perfect works. But they found this to be impossible for the law made no allowance for human frailty. Consequently, they were burdened, heavy-laden; the agreement they had made through Moses was a yoke too hard to bear.

When Jesus began his ministry, he offered the Jews release: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." - Matthew 11:28-30.

Those who were Israelites indeed and who were' conscientious in their endeavors to keep the law, could appreciate the graciousness of the opportunity that was offered to them, but the rest, being insincere, were blinded. We, as Christians, should take heed that we do not burden ourselves in like manner and so become discouraged through a misconception of what is required of us. The Galatian brethren were permitting Judaizing teachers to lead them astray in this matter, and Paul says to them: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3). This statement is a guide for us in understanding the many texts that counsel us to engage in good works. We are to be judged by our works but not works of the natural man to prove worthiness for salvation from Adamic condemnation. That is impossible for "by the deeds [works] of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20); but only by the works we do as New Creatures under the spirit's urge and guidance.

Our justification which comes to us by the grace of God, was a free gift in response to our faith in the provision he had made through Christ (Rom. 5:17, 18). But the works that are important, which we do under the guidance of God's spirit which was given to us when we were accepted into Christ, give proof of the sincerity of our heart's desire to be conformed to his image (Rom. 8:29). Even our Lord, who was perfect as a man, had to experience three and one half years of suffering, that he might become a merciful High Priest. In the instruction which Jesus gave his disciples on the Mount (Matt. 5), he sums up by saying: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father

which is in heaven is perfect." This is a very high standard, but it is the goal that is set before us and we dare not lower it. The works of Jesus were perfect -- "All God's work is perfect" -- and "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). We must *strive* for nothing less than perfection, even though we know it to be impossible except in our heart's desire. Doing the best we can to attain perfection, we must trust in the merit of Jesus' sacrifice to supply what we lack. Peter says, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." - 1 Peter 1:14-17.

The struggle the new mind has in subduing the flesh is essential to its development, for God is perfecting a New Creation, not the old fleshly being. Consequently, if we gain a place in the kingdom, the glory of that achievement will belong to him, not to us. It is not possible for us to know what we need in experience or chastisement; we do not know our degree of progress. But if we continue to cooperate and yield ourselves to his will, we can trust him to finish the work which he began in us. Our text shows love to be the end that is sought, and this agrees with Paul's exegesis in 1 Corinthians 13 that all else is valuable only when motivated by love. He does not depreciate the gifts of the spirit but maintains that love is essential to all else that we have or do.

In our text Paul cites his own love for the brethren as an example for their love for one another. His was a possessive brotherly love, especially for the churches he had been instrumental in bringing to Christ. They were his children, and no self-sacrifice was too much in his care for them. The precepts he had given them were good but his example was far more effective. One of the things for which Jesus found fault with the Pharisees was that they told others what to do but did not practice what they preached. Jesus did and "left us an example that we should follow in his footsteps." This example was the most effective, the most lasting lesson he could give, for he shows us how to follow the precepts of the Word. Paul, following in his footsteps, could say, "Even as we do toward you." - 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Thess. 3:12.

MEANS OF GRACE

There are various means of grace through which God operates in making our love to increase and abound, and as he requires our cooperation, it behooves us to know what these are. First in importance is the Word of God. The development and requirements of the New Creation are much like those in human life. Man requires food on which to grow and exist; water to cleanse and renew the vital fluids; air to oxygenize and purify the blood; exercise to keep the various functions of the body healthy and active; and rest to recuperate the physical powers. If any one of these is omitted, we cannot maintain a normal degree of health but will sicken and die. The analogy is manifest, for the Word of God is both food and drink to the new mind. If study and meditation are neglected, growth and development will cease. The New Creature's life and activity came through the word of truth, for as Jesus said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Faith, hope, joy, and peace exist because of our belief in God, in his Word and in the wonderful provision he made for us through his Son. Only those who have the spirit of God are the sons of God. Paul tells us that "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control: there is no law against these." - Gal. 5:22-23, Lamsa.

It is evident also that the Word is the basis for our love for "we are begotten by the word of truth" and God's spirit is received through that begetting. And since through the Word we receive the

spirit, the Word must of necessity be the basis for love and all spiritual grace. Faith being both the assurance and the conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:1, Goodspeed), the resultant "hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." - Romans 5:5.

Paramount among the many means of grace that bring about our perfecting as New Creatures are three, the first of which, God's providences, is not designated by name in the Authorized Version. But by this means we are kept and guided by divine care and supervision. The second means, God's chastenings, seem grievous to bear; but patiently endured, they work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Thirdly, Christian fellowship is often the means by which we learn to exercise patience and compassion for one another. Therefore let us not neglect the assembling of ourselves together.

In addition to the many admonitions to love which the Bible sets forth, there is recorded for us our Lord's own example. We are told that if we will continually hold this before our minds and meditate upon the glory and beauty of character revealed therein, we will be changed into the same image. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the *same image* from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). This shows that it is God's spirit operating upon our minds and hearts as we strive, study, and meditate upon his Word, that brings about the transformation in our lives. Therefore it is God who makes us to increase and abound in love.

It was on the Passover night that Jesus, knowing it was to be his last night on earth as a man, gave his disciples a behest that was designed to be an insignia or badge that would unfailingly identify all who were truly his followers. He did not state why he had delayed so long in giving them this behest, but we believe it was because their begetting by the holy spirit to make them Sons of God, would not take place before Pentecost, fifty days later. What is that insignia?

Monks, priests, bishops and nuns have for centuries worn clothes that would designate their religious affiliations. The Catholic laity wear a rosary or cross around the neck for the same purpose, and many students of the Bible wear a cross and crown pin for the same reason. But none of these suffice to reveal one's true heart condition. Only the insignia that Jesus gave us can. He said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you. ... By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35). This is love that will gladly sacrifice time, money, and self, even unto death for the sake of brethren in the Lord. May God grant us the grace and strength to exhibit this insignia always.

- *John T. Read*

The Glory of God

*"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.
Amen." - Romans 11:36.*

ALTHOUGH we are living in a day when reports of portentous events are gripping the public mind, our interest should not be so arrested by these, ominous though they be, that we lose sight of the fact that behind all contemporary shifts in the world's affairs is the God of history. Rather, we who are enlightened as to God's divine plan and purposes, should be seeing the glory of the God who is bringing about the fulfillment of his own prophetic word given millenniums ago, -- the One who has "declared the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). It is the glory of his omniscience and power that we behold as he brings into existence, "in due time," the world conditions outlined by prophets in ages past. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." - Acts 15:18.

THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD

When he composed the 19th Psalm, David was not only aware that God exists, but he also knew that he was a specially chosen servant of God. In his opening words (The heavens declare the glory of God), the word "declare" might have been rendered "keep recounting," or "keep revealing," for the testimony is continuous. This, in part, is the theme of the hymn loved by many: "How Great Thou Art."

Sir Isaac Newton was condemned, so it was said, because he reduced the heavens to mathematics; but astronomers, today, marvel at this intricate system of mathematics and testify that it reveals a Creator of infinite intelligence, power, and exhaustless energy.

David must have felt deep awe and reverence as he composed the words of this psalm. "The heavens declare the glory of God!" How many of us have stood on an autumn night when the atmosphere was exceptionally clear so that the stars shone with special brilliancy, -- stood and gazed "with awesome wonder" at the handiwork of God! How much more, then, must the writer of this psalm have been stirred as night after night, day after day, he observed the movement of the heavens: no noise; no confusion; all harmony; a symphony of movement. Truly God "hangs the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). The sun and the moon are perfect timekeepers, even to the degree of a split second over unknown ages! The psalmist, viewing the heavens as the work of God's hands, already had a fuller revelation of the Deity who created them. This natural testimony was understood in the light of the knowledge he had of the covenant God of Israel.

THE GLORY OF GOD AS SEEN IN HIS REVELATION TO ISRAEL

In his relationship to Israel God is revealed as one who cares for and legislates for his chosen people; and not for them only; they were to carry this understanding of God to all nations with whom they should come in contact (Deut. 4:5-8, 15). God is a God of righteousness. He is also spirit, and displeased with the worshiping of things made, "even the hosts of heaven" (Deut. 4:15-19). "Take good heed ... lest you corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image . . . and lest thou lift up thine eyes to heaven, and should be driven to worship them.... " God also revealed himself as a God of justice, of mercy and truth; a God who is jealous of his holiness; a God who desires

that his people should be like himself. This is seen in the code of morals and ethics given to Israel.

A moral code has to be a standard that is unchangeable, else the norm of morality will be constantly varying, as it will be subject to individual and group interpretation. The supreme lawgiver must legislate in accordance with his own unchangeable, holy, and righteous character of light and truth. If the code is superior to himself, then he is not the true supreme God. To give a code of laws lower than his own holiness would be to deny himself, -- this he cannot do. Israel's failure to keep the holiness of God ever before their consciousness soon lost sight of their calling to be a witness for God to other nations, and gradually sank into idolatry and immoral practices. Likewise, our present-day society, forgetting the holiness of God, has no true standard of morality. Some of the professed religious leaders have even counseled changing the moral code to meet the desires of the people! The bewilderment of many as regards a true philosophy of life may be expressed in Pilate's remark to Jesus, "What is truth?" But the revelation of the righteousness of God in the law delivered to Moses, does "declare the glory of God," and in doing so provides permanent principles of conduct and worship.

THE GLORY OF GOD AS SEEN IN THE LAW

This is the further theme of David as he continues the 19th Psalm, verses 7-9 (Psa. 19:7-9).

1. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul." "Converting the soul" might be translated "restoring the soul" (marginal reading) so apt to wander. The law revelation was not given until after at least 2500 years of human history had passed. By this time, left to their own imaginations, the nations had so far departed from what knowledge of God might have been known to them that men became debased, immoral, and so degraded in their idea of a deity that they were worshiping animals, creeping things, making to themselves gods of their own ignorant devising; and having no standard of morality, were given to all manner of lusts (Rom. 1:21-32). To Israel, who received the law, it had the effect of restoring some measure of sanity to their society. "Keep and do them," exhorted Moses, "for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say ... What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" - Deut. 4:5-8.

2. "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." What the law testified to was direct, plain, and to the point; not obscure, nor arrived at deviously as though God, himself, was not sure. The object of the law was to have those subject to it instructed in the way of truth and righteousness. The word "simple," in this passage, does not mean foolish; rather it refers to those who are artlessly sincere, with no duplicity of conduct or speech.

3. "The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart." Statutes are fixed, established customs, or rulings. They "are right"; and the enlightened conscience gives assent to their being right. The whole of Psalm 119 is a paean of praise in appreciation of these statutes and laws. "O, how I love thy law." "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Man, adrift as he is today, can find that which is sure and stable in the contemplation of and subserviency to these statutes, which are from the throne of the Eternal.

4. "The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes." The ten commandments are, indeed, pure, without admixture of that which would work defilement. They contain nothing superficial, nothing extraneous; yet cover every relationship of man to man, and man to God. They search out every avenue of life, as the Apostle testifies: "I had not known lust except the law said, Thou shalt not covet." - Romans 7:7.

5. "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever." Fear must be understood as meaning awe, profound reverence for God revealed as Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). "Is clean." That is, it is not an influence to degrading superstition. Rather, it has enduring qualities leading to the putting away of corroding thoughts and practices. Eternity will attest to the unchanging holiness of God, and that to know God is eternal life. - John 17:3.

6. "The judgments of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether." The judgments are the righteous decisions as to what is acceptable or unacceptable to God; especially such legislation as concerned the procedures to be followed in dealing with violations of these righteous laws, -- social malfeasance or misconduct. "Are true and righteous altogether." They are in exact conformity to justice, tempered with mercy; -- to what is right and proper. This is seen in the greater condemnation, and therefore the more severe judgment, on kings and priests of the nation than on the common people, whose digression might be from ignorance (Lev. 4:27, 28). The priests and rulers were supposed to know the law, and to be an example of its beneficent influence.

THE GLORY OF GOD AS SEEN IN JESUS

But though the righteousness approved of God is clearly set forth in the revelation to Israel by Moses and the prophets, yet no one had ever seen perfect obedience to the law embodied in any man. For such a one must necessarily be a reflection of God, the lawgiver. So we come to a further revelation of the glory of God in the person of Jesus. "No one," writes John, "has seen God at any time; the Only-begotten has made him known." "We beheld his glory, a glory as of an Only-begotten from a Father, full of favor and truth." -- John 1:14-18, Diaglott.

All the race had become corrupt at its source when sin entered by the transgression in Eden. One of the purposes of the law was to show this, - that all "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). How intimately is the glory of God bound up in the life and redeeming sacrifice of Jesus! Thus Jesus announced to his remaining disciples after Judas had left the group to betray him to the Chief Priests: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John 13:31, 32). This is a glory never to be duplicated, unique in all the annals of creation; -- God so loving a world gone astray, even to the extent of becoming his enemies, that he gives his Only-begotten Son to effect our redemption; and the Son so at one with the Father that he cooperated fully and willingly in this redemption. "Lo.... I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:7, 8). "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Although the life and ministry of Jesus was always reflecting the glory of God, yet a deeper revelation is seen in his sacrificial death. Here is God revealed as not only demanding that his law should be upheld, a God of justice and judgment, but further, as providing the one who could uphold it, and "make it honorable." In the cross we see the God of redeeming love. The Angels, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, all the hosts of intelligent beings, had never known such depth of God's love; there had never been any other occasion for it. His power, his intelligence and something of his wisdom and justice, and his care for his creation may have been manifested, but the full extent of his love, never. Thus John puts the emphasis on "God so loved"

To understand this, consider the contrast of God's attitude toward the burnt-offering aspect of Jesus' sacrifice, and the sin-offering aspect. At his baptism, the spirit like a dove descended on Jesus, and a "voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16, 17). And at the time of the transfiguration "a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This was God's approval of Jesus' presenting himself

"of his own voluntary will" (Lev. 1:3); and the perfect obedience in carrying out the divine program. But not so when Jesus "bore our sins on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). Then the heavens darkened, the earth shook, and from the expiring Jesus came the agonizing cry, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" How it must have torn the heart of God to hear this cry! But the redemption of this dead race, could be accomplished in no other way, and at the same time manifest the love of God as to its length and depth. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). How the glory of God shines out in his redeeming love!

THE GLORY OF GODS GRACE

All of God's dealings with members of the fallen race are in grace, as the term, in this respect, indicates something undeserved. But there is a special calling in this age of grace of which the world at large knows nothing, and of which even the merely professing Christian apprehends but indistinctly. This is "the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26, 27). This is a feature of God's purposes, so long lost sight of, that "Christ is not one, but many," that they who have the faith of Abraham to believe the promises of God as revealed in Christ, are to be "joint-heirs" with Christ in his kingdom. As Paul writes: "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself ... to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us acceptable in the beloved." - Eph. 1:3-6.

In the parable of the Sower, Mark 4:1-20, the seed, the word of the kingdom, is heard with varying degrees of attention. Following the explanation of the parable, Jesus said, "He that, hath ears to hear, let him hear." And then, further, "Take heed what you hear: with what measure you mete [to what you hear] it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath [heeded], to him shall be given: and he that hath not [heeded what he has heard], from him shall be taken even that which he hath [heard]."

At the conclusion of the series of parables given in the 13th chapter of Matthew, Jesus asked the disciples, "Have you understood all these things?" (Matt. 13:51). The understanding of any measure of divine truth constitutes a call to properly respond to it; but as shown in the parable, and as attested by history, many called do not give proper heed to what is, or may be, understood. To those who do respond, God works in them through "the engrafted word" to will and to do his good pleasure, directing and controlling the thoughts, the judgments, the emotions, and the course of life, accomplishing that which had been predetermined should be the excellency of those to be "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ." - Phil. 2:12, 13; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 8:17.

The Greek word rendered "called" in the A.V. translation, has the sense of "being invited" (Rom. 8:28, Diaglott). But does God call, or invite, only the wise and morally good of this world? By no means. "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: 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, . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:26-29). Those who respond to the invitation do so in faith. Before ever the invitation is given, everything has been readied (Luke 14:17). Arrangement has been made for reconciliation, for God cannot work in any estranged from him; and in order to justify, God has accounted to us the glory that was in the unfallen Adam, and redeemed for us by Jesus. - Romans 8:28-30.

Out of the permission of evil, God obtains a divine family, which had its existence in the purpose of God from the beginning. What wonders of grace that God should take members of a fallen race, who in faith submit to the rule of his spirit as it operates through the word of truth, and make them to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:1-7). With Paul we pray, that "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." - Eph. 1:18-20.

- *F. A. Essler*

What Say the Scriptures?

Basic Bible Studies No. 8 - God's Secret Purpose

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." - Colossians 1:27.

WE ARE now to consider a Scripturally declared Divine Purpose so truly astounding as to tax the powers of belief. Inasmuch as this wonderful Purpose is conditioned on the fact of the antecedent Advent, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, as preface to our study we may first profitably linger over some thoughts, relative to those momentous events.

Regarding the historic interval occupied by Jesus' life, Lindsay in his work the *Chrono-Astrolabe*, pertinently writes:

"Christianity exists now, and we know from Greek, Roman and Jewish history that there was a time when it was not. The Jews were strictly forbidden to hold intercourse with foreigners; but, notwithstanding their exclusiveness, the Gentile writers often mention them. The Founder of Christianity, at what time soever he lived, gave his followers a law the very reverse of exclusiveness, by going to all nations to make known his doctrines. Not a word about Christianity is mentioned by Caesar, Cicero, Livy, Virgil, or Ovid, and to believe that it existed without being mentioned by them is preposterous credulity. A century after these writers, Christians are mentioned by Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius, and the *advent* of their Master must have been in the interval. Four different accounts of the life and death of Christ are given; the difference of authorship is proved by apparent discrepancies, and the truthfulness is confirmed by the general harmony. Luke relates several dates with great minuteness, and this affords a strong argument of veracity. He says John commenced his preaching in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and that soon after, Jesus also commenced, when he was about thirty years of age. He also says that Christ was born in the reign of Augustus, and both he and Matthew place this event a little before the death of Herod. Now, from Ptolemy's canon we know exactly the times of Augustus and Tiberius, and the time of the death of Herod is determined from Josephus. The time thus obtained for the origin of Christianity is *just the interval of those Roman writers who do not mention it and those who do*, and there is no other time possible that can be fixed upon for its origin. False religions may arise from small beginnings as well as true; the utmost care and caution are necessary to discriminate, and credulity is as culpable as skepticism. A remarkable dissimilarity is observed in the teaching of the founder of Islamism and of the Founder of Christianity. The former affirmed that he had interviews with heaven, and, without giving any proof of the truth of his assertion, condemned all who disbelieved him to future punishment. The latter never found fault with the Jews for disbelieving His word, but for denying the evidence of their senses, or attributing His gracious miracles to demons. The Jews were trained from infancy to entertain the highest respect for the laws of Moses, and the most thorough contempt for all other religions. That a handful of persons thus trained should spontaneously arise and denounce those laws that they were taught to venerate is contrary to experience. No such example in the annals of history is anywhere found, and its occurrence would be as great a miracle as any in the Bible. No cause conceivable could effect such a change, except miracles addressed to the senses, or a direct voice from heaven; and those who deny those miracles as being contrary to experience, are compelled to admit a still greater miracle. Christianity certainly had an origin, and no other than that assigned to it would consist with experience. The books of the New Testament, also, can be proved to have been written in the first century, and not long after the events recorded in them.

They could not have been written in the century before, *for the events recorded did not then exist*, neither could they have been written in the century after, *for they are quoted and commented upon by a host of writers that then lived*. The writers of the second century are quoted by those of the third; and thus a regular chain of writers, that has never been broken, never will, never can be broken, has been formed from the Apostles to the present day."

To the crucifixion and death of Christ all the New Testament writers bear united testimony. The reality of Jesus' death would appear to be amply evidenced by the spear thrust, but St. John (as if anticipating the suggestion of negative criticism that the body when removed from the cross was simply in some state of suspended animation) additionally testifies that from the pierced side issued "blood and water." Medical authorities consider this as external evidence of a most extraordinary occurrence, even the rupture of the heart -- the blood exuding from it into the pericardium having separated into red clots and water serum. Jesus died literally of a broken heart! "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." - John 19:35.

Christianity has well been called the "Religion of the Empty Tomb," for the resurrection of the Savior is indeed the sole basis for all Christian hope. St. Paul emphatically states: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. . . . But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." - 1 Cor. 15:17, 20.

As we consider the Scripture account of this wondrous miracle, we note that Jesus was "put to death indeed in flesh but made alive in spirit" (for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"), and confirmed his change of nature to the disciples in his subsequent remarkable manifestations. Through these his resurrection was proved an accomplished fact; and nonetheless a fact even if his earthly body had *remained in the tomb*. Its disappearance, however, evidences the profound wisdom of God; for by this circumstance has been provided, in the disciples' and opposed authorities' consequent reactions, *a historical certainty* of the resurrection of Jesus. The possibility of deception was precluded, for in the succeeding events these two groups alone were involved. This will be clearer if we consider the three possible explanations for the disappearance of the entombed body, namely

1. It was removed by the Jewish authorities.
2. It was removed by the disciples.
3. It was removed by an act of God.

1. Assuming the authorities had removed the body, is it logical to believe they would have remained silent before the bold insistence of the Apostles (mentioned twelve times in the Book of Acts alone) that Jesus had risen from the dead, when such preaching could have been so easily disproved?

2. On the other hand, if in some manner the disciples had removed the body from the close-guarded tomb, can reason believe they would have endured the bitter persecution and even death which befell them, in the propagation of a falsehood?

3. These two hypotheses based on the human elements involved being inadmissible under logical scrutiny, we are returned to the Bible's own account. A careful reading of one of the Gospel records (John 20:3-8) reveals that the linen wrappings and headband lay in the empty sepulcher exactly as when swathed round the body - their undisturbed position indicating its *miraculous* removal. It was this sight that convinced John he was beholding the evidence of an immediate act of God!

With assurance does Peter later declare: "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the Prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." - Acts 10:40-43.

To which St. Paul adds the confirmatory words: God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." - Acts 17:31.

Having "showed himself alive by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3) during forty days, Jesus, in a final demonstration of his Messiahship to his disciples, dramatically ascended until hidden from their sight by a cloud. They then received the angelic message: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you *into heaven*, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." - Acts 1:11.

From these and similar Scriptures it becomes evident that a period intervenes before Jesus returns, that there are thus two Advents separated in time -- the first to provide the Ransom *Price*, and the second to complete the Ransom *Work*. But why this intervening period? The question brings us at once to a consideration of our study subject:

GOD'S SECRET PURPOSE

We have thus far in our Scripture studies discerned the outline of God's wondrous Purpose on behalf of suffering humanity -- a deliverance of the "groaning creation" from sin and degradation to eternal life -- to be effected by the Messiah as the Divine Agency when the Kingdom of God is established on this earth. Then shall God's will be done on earth as it is done in heaven: "He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa. 25:8). To this glorious theme of Earth's Coming Joy, we will return in the final study of this series.

But now we shall trace in the Scriptures another Purpose of God which (like Ezekiel's "wheels within wheels, full of eyes round about") is hidden within the frame of his Purpose for the nations. This inner Purpose is the divine selection of *a class to be associated with Christ* in the work of blessing all the families of the earth. These comprise a "Little Flock," who, instead of being restored to human perfection, will be granted a share with Christ in the First Resurrection -- a change from earthly nature to heavenly nature -- far above angels, principalities, and powers, like unto their glorified Redeemer and Head. This unspeakable honor St. Paul refers to as "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). The very contemplation of such a prospect fills the mind with an overwhelming sense of wonder and awe.

Inasmuch as this, the Heavenly Hope of the Bible, is so generally misunderstood as applicable to all who have taken the initial necessary step of belief in Jesus (God's requirement for justification from Adamic sin unto eternal life on this earth - a most glorious prospect in itself), we shall draw copiously from the Scriptures to show that this Hope is limited to those who go on to self-sacrificing discipleship in "following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," numbering in all "an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1-4). These alone have "liberty to enter into the holiest [eventually the actual presence of God] by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has made for them" (Heb. 10:19, 20). It

was to open this "way" that Jesus died nineteen centuries before God's Kingdom was due to be established, and for their selection the Gospel-Age interim was set apart. This, says St. Paul, is "the sacred secret which had been hidden away from the ages and from the generations, but now hath been made manifest unto his saints -- unto whom God hath been pleased to make known what is the glorious wealth of this sacred secret among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26, 27, *Rotherham*). The Old Testament is replete with predictions regarding the restoration of the earth and its inhabitants when God's "footstool" shall be made glorious, but within its pages we find no direct word concerning spiritual hopes. And yet, hidden in types and figurative language, in the light of the New Testament, these can be traced.

First, there is that most beautiful of marriage proposals, Psalm 45, verses 10 and 11 (Psalm 45:10-11): "Hearken, O daughter and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord and worship thou him." Here the elect Church of this Gospel Age is pictured as a Bride, the ultimate Wife of the great King, Immanuel. To this view of the Church' the Apostle's words agree: "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." - 2 Cor. 11:2.

Again, the same truth was foreshadowed in Abraham's selection of a wife for his son Isaac, through the instrumentality of his servant Eliezer. Thus God through the medium of the holy spirit calls the Church to be associated with Christ, the Bridegroom, who will receive her at his second advent. And in the blessing bestowed upon Rebekah, "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions" (Gen. 24:60), we may glimpse the Bride of Christ sharing with him the work of blessing all the families of the earth (Gal. 3:29). Intermingled with St. Paul's practical exhortations to the Ephesian Church, this same truth is emphasized: "Submitting yourselves one to another in reverence of Christ -- ye wives unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. Because a husband is the head of his wife, as the Christ also is the head of the assembly, he being the savior of the body. Nevertheless as the assembly submitteth herself unto the Christ, so the wives unto their husbands in everything. Ye husbands be loving your wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly and delivered himself up in her behalf, that her he might sanctify, having purified her with the bath of water in declaration, that he might present unto himself the assembly all glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any of such things, but that she should be holy and blameless. So ought the husbands also to be loving their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself. No one in fact ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Christ the assembly, because members are we of his body. For this cause will a man leave his father and his mother and will cleave unto his wife. And they two shall become one flesh [Gen. 2:24]. This sacred secret is great. I however am speaking as to Christ and the assembly." - Eph. 5:21-32, *Rotherham*.

Note again the words of John the Baptist: "He that bath the Bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore, is fulfilled" (John 3:29). John does not identify himself with the Bride class. He was the last of the Prophets; a faithful member of the House of Servants of the Mosaic Dispensation, but did not live on to attain the Gospel privilege which followed Jesus' redemptive work. Of him Jesus said: "There has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist, and yet I say unto you, the least one in the Kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28). These words are understandable only as we recognize that the humblest position in the Bride class being selected during this Age, is a higher honor than that which belongs to the very noblest of the previous dispensations.

In Hebrews 12:23 we read a most significant expression: "the Church of the Firstborn." On the memorable night thirty-five centuries ago when Israel was delivered from bondage, the tenth

plague which slew the firstborn of Egypt, was stayed in each Israelite home where the blood of the "Passover Lamb" was sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels. These miraculously spared firstborn were exchanged by divine command (Num. 3:12, 13) for the tribe of Levi, who were set apart from the other eleven tribes to a mediatorial work in connection with the Tabernacle (and later Temple) sacrifices and services. In the division of the Promised Land, the tribe of Levi received no inheritance; rather, as the Lord himself said: "I am thy part and thin inheritance" (Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:8, 9). We may accept these facts and the wealth of other Levitical functions as divinely ordained types prefiguring Jesus and his associated saints and their mediatorial work in the Millennial Kingdom.

Turning from these representations of the elect in type and figure, we consider some of Jesus' teachings relative to this class. To the disciples, his presence and ministry marked the proximity of the long awaited Messianic Kingdom. All their hopes and expectations were of an earthly nature. Gradually and in small portions he imparted to them the wondrous truth concerning their special relationship to himself - truth which they comprehended only after the Pentecostal blessing of the holy spirit. We submit a number of Scriptures in which this truth, this emphasis upon a class chosen by divine arrangement, is embodied -- Scriptures the more impressive when contrasted with God's promise to bless *all* the nations eventually.

Matthew 7:14 - "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

John 12:26 - "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be."

Matthew 13:11 - "It is given unto you [the disciples] to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them [the people in general] it is not given."

Matthew 11:25 - "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

Luke 12:32 - "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

John 15:5, 16, 19 - "I am the vine, ye are the branches.... Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you.... I have chosen you out of the world."

John 14:3 - "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

John 17:6, 20, 16, 24 - "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world... . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.... They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.... Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

Matthew 24:31 - "He shall send his angels . . . and gather together his Elect."

Matthew 25:21 - "Good and faithful servant - . . . I will make thee ruler over many things."

To which may be added two verses from the Book of Revelation:

Rev. 3:21 - "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne."

Rev. 2:26 - "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

The Apostolic letters -- directed exclusively to these "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1), and for their spiritual edification, encouragement and instruction-are commentaries in themselves upon our theme. The following selections should prove conclusively

the Scripture basis for the doctrine of a "high calling," a secret purpose of God, during the Gospel Age.

2 Pet. 1:3, 4 - "Exceeding great and precious promises - that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature."

Acts 15:14-17 - "How God . . . did visit the Gentiles, to take out a people for his name."

Rom. 8:28-30 - "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."

1 Pet. 1:2 - "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God."

Eph. 1:4 - "Chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

1 Pet. 2:9 - "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood."

1 Thess. 1:4 - "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

Rom. 8:28 - "The called according to his purpose."

Rev. 17:14 - "They that are with him are called, and chosen."

2 Pet. 1:10 - "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

1 Cor. 1:26-29 - "Ye see your calling, brethren, ... not many wise men after the flesh, . . . not many noble, are called."

James 2:5; "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?"

1 Thess. 2:12 - "Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his Kingdom and glory."

2 Pet 1:3 - "Called us to glory and virtue."

Rom. 8:16, 17 - "Joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him."

Gal. 3:27, 29 - "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs according to the promise."

2 Tim. 2:12 - "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

1 John 3:2, 3 - "When he shall appear, we shall be like him."

Phil. 3:14 - "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Phil. 3:20, 21 - "Our polity is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

1 Cor. 12:12-28 - "For as the body is one, and hath many members, ... so also is [the] Christ."

Rom. 12:5 - "We, being many, are one Body in Christ."

Eph. 5:30 - "We are members of his Body."

Eph. 1:22, 23 - "The Church which is his Body."

1 Cor. 6:2, 3 - "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . [and] angels?"

1 Cor. 15:47-49 - "The first man is of the earth, earthy - the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy - and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

1 Cor. 15:53 - "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Rev. 20:6 - "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection - on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

There thus emerges a Scriptural portrait of a body of Christians who in gratitude for the grace of God in Jesus Christ, emulate him in the consecration of their lives to God's will; and under the Divine disciplinary experiences are transformed into Jesus' likeness. They are "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:20, 21), the grand meeting place of God and mankind in the Millennium. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my special treasure" (Mal. 3:17). St. Paul describes their change to glory when the "secret of God is finished" (Rev. 10:7) in these words: "For the

Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). This is described elsewhere (Rev. 19:7) in these words: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." In the Reign of Glory to follow, the Bridegroom and the Bride will lift up poor humanity from sin and sorrow, from degradation and death, and give to each and all the fullest opportunity to return to human perfection and to Divine favor and everlasting life. Then shall "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. . . . And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." - Matt. 13:43.

From the heart of each saint who has "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6:18-20), there wells up a joyful echo to John's words of praise (Rev. 1:5, 6)

"Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;
To him be glory and dominion
Forever and ever.
Amen."

- *W. J. Siekman*

Report of Pilgrim Visit to Britain

ON THE evening of Tuesday, May 21, 1974, Sis. Webster and I were air-borne for Britain on a Pan Am 747 - BOAC being on strike. Approximately six hours later we were safely on the landing runway at Heathrow Airport. We were met by Bro. Simmonds who had to wait an hour for us to locate our luggage due to a mix-up because of the strike.

He drove us to our hotel where some brethren were waiting to greet us and have tea. The fellowship and kindness on this occasion was a foretaste of what we were to experience throughout our trip.

Our first meeting was with the Central London class on Thursday evening. Our reception was warm, friendly, and most encouraging. There were 11 present, all of whom we had met in 1969.

On Saturday morning, May 25, we made our way to Leicester by train and were met at the station by Bro. A. Charcharos who had arranged our schedule for the entire trip, and was most helpful in the follow-up work necessary to keep all running smoothly. We went straight to the Blaby Convention where about 125 brethren were assembled for a day and a half of sweet fellowship and helpful discourses. An atmosphere of warm Christian love and liberty in Christ pervaded the various meetings and intermissions. All were ministered to in temporal needs very efficiently, and adequately as well.

Going north, our next stop was in Manchester. From this point we served the Bury class, 16 present; Manchester class, 21 present; and St. Helens class with 22 present. Again we had the joy of meeting many of those we had met before and also making new acquaintances. At Bury we saw Bro. Musk (who had been very ill) and had sweet fellowship with him on two different occasions. We also called on two elderly Sisters who were not able to attend the meetings.

On June 1 we left for Glasgow where we were met by our namesake Bro. Ian Webster and generously taken care of for the duration of our stay.

Two meetings were held at Glasgow, about 25 present at each meeting. We enjoyed good fellowship at the tea between the services.

From Glasgow we journeyed by train to Dundee for a visit with Bro. and Sis. Wood. We spent two days in sweet fellowship. They are isolated now because some friends have moved to England and others have passed away.

From Dundee we returned to Rugby in England. We were entertained at Haythog Crick at the home of Peter and Millie Couling. They have a farm and this experience was most refreshing. The meeting at Rugby was attended by a very appreciative audience of about 18.

On June 8 there was a home gathering at Atherstone where about 25 friends were able to attend. We had a study and then a discourse. The next day about 55 gathered at Coventry for a discourse and a very live Bible study on the Epistle of Jude.

We missed Brothers Percy and Ralph Walton from this area. They had been a great blessing to the Coventry class.

From the Midland area we made our way back to Aldersbrook in the London area. This was a midweek meeting with 22 gathered in a schoolroom. Very good fellowship with these friends. Bro. and Sis. Rutherford and their son James came to the meeting and took us to their home in Harpenden for a visit. Some interesting discussion regarding the closing days of the age marked our visit there. James took time off from his busy life to take us around to see some of the historical places in England.

A Convention at Chesham was next on the list. This was arranged through the cooperation of the brethren in the Windsor area and proved to be two days of rich blessing. There were about 85 present. The discourses were uplifting to the New Creature, and the fellowship, sweet.

Hitchin was our next visit with 12 present. The next day one of the Sisters took us to see Cambridge University -- one of the oldest in Britain.

A long bus ride through the beautiful countryside brought us to Yeovil in southwest England. The class here, with the exception of dear Bro. and Sis. Fox, is comparatively new, and mostly young people. They are very enthusiastic and earnest in regard to their consecration. The 21 present were loathe to leave after the discourse.

From Yeovil we went west by train to Cardiff for a renewal of fellowship enjoyed in 1969. We gave two discourses here. The meetings were smaller than in 1969, due to death and infirmities of various kinds. There were 12 present.

A visit to Gloucester, England, was next. Ten brethren were present at the meeting. This city is in the Cotswold country, a very lovely part of England.

Forest Gate had a one day Convention. We met the Sutcliffes for the first time and enjoyed their hospitality. Brethren from the surrounding classes attended. Two discourses were given, and a study held, with intermissions for tea and supper.

Our last two appointments were in Eastborne and Bexhill on the south coast. A transportation problem in connection with this journey (it being necessary to get from Romford to Victoria Station, a difficult task with heavy luggage) was solved by the kindness of a Sister who drove us through the heavy London traffic to our train, a most thoughtful and helpful service.

At Eastborne we renewed old friendships. There was a meeting scheduled and 9 were present.

Then Bexhill by the Sea was our last stop, where we were able to rest for about three days before leaving for home. We had fine fellowship, during our stay there. 15 were present at the meeting, and some had visited with us on the previous day.

Throughout our journey in Britain we sought to emphasize the themes that have to do with the development of the New Creature and the Unity of the Spirit, which should be uppermost in the minds of all the Body Members.

The loving kindness and helpfulness of the friends made it an experience long to be remembered, and in the aggregate, much treasure was laid up in heaven. We returned home July 5 with many happy memories and with deep thankfulness to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus for the privilege of service.

- J. B. Webster

He Scatters All the Darkness

Long years have passed since to my Lord I yielded,
Things present, past, and things to come,
And set my sails for that blest port of heaven;
Now by his grace I'm almost home.

The sea seems calmer than when, first I started;
And yet I know the waves run high;
For there's a tempest brewing on the waters,
And angry clouds o'erspread the sky.

'Tis not because the winds and waves are stilling,
That there's a calm within my breast;
Nor that my own heart bears no trace of sorrow,
That I can sing of peace and rest.

Sad are the groans of earth's despairing millions;
For death with life goes hand in hand;
The mighty foe whose pride wrought man's destruction,
Seems to have conquered sea and land.

But there's a light shines o'er the troubled waters,
That all the darkness cannot hide;
For He who braved for us death's raging billows,
Has safely reached the other side.

He is the light that scatters all my darkness,
It is His peace that keeps me calm;
He is the source of all my joy and comfort
His precious name my sweetest psalm.

Dear Lamb of God! ah, who can tell His goodness,
Ten thousand tongues would not suffice!
Through all the coming ages God will pour forth
The blessings of His sacrifice.

Oh, may I seek more earnestly to know Him,
And all the fulness of His love;
Count all things else but dross that I may win Him,
And reign with Him in light above.

- *Margaret H. Black.*

The Question Box

Psalm 110:1

Question

Please explain Psalm 110:1, which reads as follows: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. "

Answer:

We will first state our understanding of the passage and then submit Scriptural proof as to the correctness of our exposition.

(a) Explanation of text:

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

(b) Scriptural proof as to the correctness of this interpretation:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

was only one being in all the universe so high, so exalted, so powerful, to whom its language could be applicable, and that that Being was David's Son and David's Lord.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) He must be a descendant of David.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- P. L. Read.

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