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The Joy of Faith Our New Year Message

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." - Nehemiah 8:10.

ENTERING this, another year of pilgrimage, no child of faith needs to be reminded of our Master's predictive words: "Upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." - Luke 21:25, 26, R.S.V.

Ours is a day of world confusion which might well lead to the "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" forecast by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 12:1). It is truly a day of upheaval in every sphere of life, be it moral, social, political, financial, economic, or religious. Events everywhere increasingly evidence the proximity of God's wonderful worldwide kingdom, long promised and awaited and prayed for-"the desire of all nations" (Hag. 2:7). "It is near, even at the doors" (Matt. 24:33). "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Psalm 30:5.

These evidences that the culmination of Christian hope is close at hand are recognized only by faith. But for those who

"see the marriage splendor,
within the open door
and know that those who enter
are blest forevermore

there abides that inner exaltation of spirit -- that "joy" of our heading text. And this is a joy regardless of our present circumstances, whether they be physical infirmity, loneliness, lack of fellowship, cares of life, financial needs or increasing age. Shall anxieties concerning these mar

faith in our Father's provision? No rather, let us emulate the faith of one of old (Hab. 3:17, 18) who, bereft of all physical necessities, did yet rejoice in the Lord and found joy in the God of his salvation. It is this note of strengthening joy that we would urge upon ourselves and upon all our readers as we enter the coming year.

Our Master was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," yet with such a delight in doing his Father's will for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross, despised the shame, and left to us as a present heritage *his joy*, that ours might be full (John 15:11). "Herein," said he, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). It is remarkable that St. Paul in listing nine of the elements that comprise spiritual fruitage (Gal. 5:22, 23), includes "joy." The other eight require much development through the disciplines of time, but "joy" was an immediate reaction of mind from our first apprehension of Divine benevolence. God gave to us "the oil of joy for mourning." And our "joy in the Lord" increasingly glorifies our Father as in patient obedience we undergo the trying experiences intended to bring us to spiritual maturity; enabling us to heartily comply with the Apostle Paul's exhortation -- "Rejoice evermore." - 1 Thess. 5:16.

THE CHRISTIAN'S JOYS

Let us take inventory of some of the sources of the joys which are ours and which provide the strength to persevere in our evil day. Below are listed seven -- each scripturally amplified.

First and foremost, is our heavenly Father himself. To direct our thoughts to the Author of our salvation is to become filled with joy!

"I am so glad that
My Father loves me!"

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). "So close to his heart does Jehovah gather his loyal and faithful children that they feel the warmth of his love, and the responsive language of their hearts is 'I will abide in thy tabernacle' -- under thy protection -- 'forever'" (Manna, October 17). "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous" (Ps. 97:12). "Let all those that put their trust in thee *rejoice*: let them ever shout for *joy*, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be *joyful* in thee (Ps. 5:11). "Be glad in the Lord, and *rejoice*, ye righteous: and shout for *joy*, all ye that are upright in heart" (Ps. 32:11). "Let the righteous be *glad*; let them *rejoice* before God: yea, let them *exceedingly rejoice*. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and *rejoice* before him" (Ps. 68:3, 4). "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). "Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." - Jude 24, 25, R.S.V.

Second -- does not contemplation of our Master Jesus bring instant joy to our hearts? Does a bride rejoice in her bridegroom? "My beloved is mine, and I am his ... he is the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys ... the chiefest among ten thousand ... yea, he is altogether lovely" (Song of Solomon 2:16, 1; 5:10, 16). "Whom, not having seen, you love; on whom, not now looking, but believing, you *rejoice with joy* inexpressible and glorious" (1 Pet. 1:8, Diaglott). "These things have I spoken unto you, that *my joy* might remain in you, and that your *joy* might be *full*" (John 15:11). Hear His prayer: "that they might have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). And what of the prospect of seeing him as he is -- "Face to face, in all his glory" -- a

prospect exceeding imagination! Even now, may our joy abound in the realization of his presence in our daily lives -- "Christ liveth in me." - Gal. 2:20.

"As some rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own,
So, when THOU dwellest in a mortal soul,
All Heaven's own sweetness seems round it thrown."

Third -- what shall we say as regards the heavenly host, the "innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22), the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 5:11)? They sang and shouted for joy when the Lord laid earth's foundations (Job 38:7) and praised God at Jesus' birth (Luke 2:13, 14). The marvelous work of God since Calvary in "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10) is to them as a theatrical spectacle (1 Cor. 4:9) into "which things the angels desire to look" (1 Pet. 1:12). They themselves are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), the "little ones" whose angels do always behold the face of God (Matt. 18:10). The Master said (Luke 15:10): "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." What will be their paean at the marriage of the Lamb! Let this fruit of joy abound and strengthen "the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees."

Fourth -- what of our brethren in the Lord, who will be part of our eternal family in heaven? Think not of them as now, beset with many infirmities, some of which may have caused us severe trials and deep suffering. Let us consider rather their good hearts, their earnest endeavors to walk faithfully this WAY. Think how wonderful they will be in perfection and glory when the Potter has finished his marvelous work in them, and in us also. What joy will be there! God has promised (Ps. 132:16): "I will clothe her [Zion's] priests with salvation; and her saints shall *shout aloud for joy*. "How beautiful is the September 7 Manna Comment: "These New Creatures in Christ Jesus know each other not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. In each others' spirits or new minds there are the noblest sentiments, the highest aspirations, that which is good, true, noble, pure -- whatever may be their weaknesses according to the flesh. They love each other from the new standpoint of intention, will, harmony with God, and their friendship for one another grows increasingly as they perceive each other's energy in fighting the good fight of faith against the evil influences of the world, the flesh and the Adversary. Nor tongue nor pen can properly express the love, the friendship, which subsists between these New Creatures in Christ Jesus, to whom old things have passed away, and all things have become new."

"O! How sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
So free from all sorrow and pain,
His songs on our lips, and his work in our hands,
To meet one another again."

Fifth -- does not the knowledge of the Divine message of truth bring joy to our hearts? "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the *joy and rejoicing* of mine heart" (Jer. 15:16). "Light is sown for the righteous, and [the resulting] *gladness* for the upright in heart" (Ps. 97:11). "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:103, 105). "Ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). "Thy statutes have been my *songs* in the house of my pilgrimage" (Ps. 119:54). Truly "the half was never told! May our joy in God's Word be a constant source of inner strength.

Sixth -- consider our tribulations in this Narrow Way. Can we find present joy in them which will strengthen us to endure unto final victory? Consider these scriptures: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. *Rejoice* in that day, and *leap for joy*; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:22). James writes (James 1:2): "My brethren, count it *all joy* when ye fall into divers trials." And Paul, who rejoiced in his own sufferings (Col. 1:24) gives us these precious words of encouragement (Rom. 5:3-5): "We *glory* in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy spirit which is given unto us." He continues in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our *light* affliction, which is but for *a moment*, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look *not* at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Such counsel is truly cause for joy to every Christian. We seal it with Paul's words (Rom. 8:28): "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The joyful confidence of faith!

Seventh, we consider poor humanity -- not their present woeful lot but their coming future, when joy unending (Isa. 35:10) will be their blessed portion. Then will we share with our beloved Master in the joyful Millennial work of "lavishing blessings all around" even as our heavenly Father has afore determined. How apropos are the words of Brother Russell: "What a glorious prospect the new dispensation will present when fully inaugurated! The changes from one dispensation to another in the past have been marked and prominent, but this change will be most eventful of all. No wonder that the thought of such a spectacle -- of a whole race returning to God with songs and praise and everlasting joy upon their heads -- should seem almost too good to believe; but he who has promised is able also to perform all his good pleasure. Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet sorrow and sighing *shall flee away*; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death, yet joy awaits the Millennial morning, and all tears shall be wiped from off all faces, and beauty shall be given for ashes, and the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness."

This beautiful prose entrances our hearts! We would linger over this wonderful and glorious future for suffering mankind and so quote further: "No creature of the redeemed race will be too low for Divine grace to reach, through the all-powerful and blessed agency of the kingdom. No degradation of sin will be too deep for the hand of mercy to fathom, to rescue the blood-bought soul; no darkness of ignorance and superstition will be so dense in any heart but that the light of Divine truth and love will penetrate its gloom and bring to it a knowledge of the joy and gladness of the New Day, and an opportunity to share the same by obedience. No disease that can attack and pollute the physical system will be beyond the prompt control of the great Physician. And no deformity, or monstrosity, or superfluity, or redundancy, or mental imbecility, will be able to resist his healing touch."

In this kingdom prepared "from the foundation of the world," the glorious portion available for every human being as an eternal gift of God through Christ, when contrasted with their present misery, does even now fill our hearts with overflowing joy -- yes, brings tears of gladness to our eyes. Alleluia and Alleluia!

JOYS BEYOND THE MILLENNIUM

There remains yet the contemplation of the future joys awaiting the Church after the work of earthly restitution is completed -- the "ages to come" to which St. Paul refers in Ephesians 2:7. Here the veil to our understanding has not yet been drawn back and imagination is too feeble to penetrate the glorious future. There is a dim perception as made known to us by the Word of God, but it still remains true that "Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor. 13:12). There yet remain blessings untold for it is written: "How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; ... they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." - Psalm 31:19; 36:8.

Every plane of intelligent life possesses its share of wonderful joys. But as we go up the scale from the lowest (the human) to the highest (the divine), the joys increase to that pinnacle reflected in the Psalmist's words (Psa. 16:11): "In thy presence is *fulnes of joy* [there can be no more]; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." For these unknown joys yet to be we sing

"A little while:" with patience, Lord,
I fain would ask, "How long?"
For how can I with such a hope
Of glory and of home,
With such a joy awaiting me,
Not wish the hour were come?
How can I keep the longing back,
And how suppress the groan?

Let us then fearlessly await our consummation, "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). We shall behold His face in righteousness: we shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness (Ps. 17:15). In these days of our earthly pilgrimage which remain, and in which "our cup [of joy] runneth over," may each heart sing with praise to our heavenly Father and to our blessed Lord Jesus, heeding under every stress St. Paul's words (Phil. 4:4):

"Rejoice in the Lord *alway*:
Again I say, Rejoice."

- *W. J. Siekman*

The Call and Destiny of Israel

"Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." - Isaiah 27:6.

From earliest times the nation of Israel has considered itself set apart for a special purpose in the plans of God, and other nations and peoples have in varying degree resented this apparent assumption of a position superior to theirs. What is the nature of this claim and to what extent is it justified by Scripture?

The constitution of Jacob's descendants into a nation some three million strong at Mount Sinai in the 15th century B.C. is a historical fact; at that time they occupied the land which has ever since been associated with the name Israel. According to the Bible the inception of that nation was in consequence of a Divine revelation and the institution of a Covenant whereby Israel bound themselves to obey a codified system of laws defining Divine standards for everyday life. The Covenant provided that national loyalty to God would ensure peace and prosperity in their land; disloyalty, on the other hand, would bring adversity, invasion, and ultimately expulsion from the land and the loss of all their God-given privileges. In the outcome the nation was, from time to time, alternately loyal and disloyal, and experienced the respective consequences, but at all times there remained the underlying consciousness of a God given mission so that the idea of a destiny of separation from the rest of the world for the execution of some as yet only dimly-seen purpose was always there.

That purpose was more clearly revealed after the coming of Christ, when the nature of the Divine working in the world of men was defined and understood in greater detail. Looking back from the vantage point of the New Testament, it is perceptible that God's purpose in calling and selecting Israel for a specific duty in human history was threefold. In the first place, Israel was the appointed channel and custodian of the oral and written revelation of God and his purposes for the fifteen hundred years which were to elapse ere Christ appeared. Moses, as the practical founder of the nation, already held the records of God's dealings in the past with the patriarchs, the histories of ancient times, and so on, all going back to an unknown antiquity. To these he added the happenings of his own day, and the revelations and commands of God transmitted to Israel through him at this momentous beginning of their national history. Then in after times saintly and upright men contributed that which they themselves had discerned of the ways and purposes of God; so the Old Testament came into being and remained intact during the remainder of Israel's national existence. *"Unto them,"* says Paul in Romans 3:2, *"were committed the oracles of God"* and it is due to the care of reverential men in each successive generation that these oracles were preserved as no other book of antiquity.

In the second place Israel was commissioned a concrete witness to the reality of Divine lordship over the earth, that notwithstanding the prevalence of evil in the world, God is ruler over all and will ultimately make his rule effective. However imperfectly Israel did witness to this and however grievously they were guilty of disloyalty it remained always that God was their God and their king. In a world rapidly degenerating from polytheism to atheism Israel maintained that God IS, and God is ONE. The existence and the history and the achievements, as well as the failures, of Israel were an essential preliminary to the establishment of the Christian Church of this present Age. The debt owed by Christians to Israel is very great.

Thirdly, and most important of all, Israel is the destined Divine instrument on earth, working in association with the Church in heaven for the education and conversion of the world during the

coming Age of Christ's kingdom upon earth. *"Israel shall blossom and bud,"* said Isaiah, *"and fill the face of the world with fruit"* (Isa. 27:6). Of the purified and converted and completely dedicated Israel nation of that future day God has said *"I will also give thee for a light to the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth"* (Isa. 49:6). From the national experiences, both light and dark, joyous and tragic, of three and a half millenniums, there will emerge a fruitage, a "remnant," as Isaiah puts it, a servant of the Lord, in the form of a people that is fitted both by knowledge of God and experience of good and evil to be messengers and missionaries of that new Age when the Gospel is to be preached in power, and none will fail to hear. And it follows, of course, that in that day Judaism and Christianity will be one faith, for they who rejected Christ at first will now cry out, as Jesus said they would, *"blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

Why was Israel the nation thus chosen out of all possible candidates? There is no doubt about the fact that the Lord did specifically select and appoint this people for his purpose. *"Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth"* (Deut. 7:6). This was no arbitrary selection. The Lord had a reason. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch it is repeatedly stated that the Lord chose Israel because of the loyalty and faith of their forefather Abraham, and his consequent promise that his purposes for mankind would be worked out through Abraham's posterity. But God only chooses and uses fit instruments for his service. A dispassionate appraisal of the character of Abraham and of Israel shows that there was, and is, something in this particular patriarch and these his descendants which stands out in sharp relief against the characteristics of humanity in general. Abraham was a man of very rare faith and tenacity; emerging as he did from the welter of Semitic-Hamitic peoples of Sumer, the world's oldest civilization, inheritors of the wisdom and knowledge of the most ancient times going back perhaps to the beginning of man's presence on earth, he was peculiarly fitted to build upon the foundation of such past experiences of God as men had retained, and advance that experience to new conceptions and new heights. He was a man of rare insight and unparalleled courage; when the Divine call came to him he unhesitatingly forsook the glittering but fast disintegrating Sumerian civilization in which he had been born, and went out to a land which God showed him, *"not knowing whither he went"* (Heb. 11:8). That same faith and courage, transmitted to his descendants of six hundred years later, enabled them to declare at Sinai, *"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient"* (Exod. 24:7), so the nation of Israel was born and became the special people of the Lord.

The nation was organized at Sinai. There they entered into a Covenant with God at the instance of Moses, binding them to loyalty and obedience and rigorous separation from their neighbor nations. It is easy to credit all this to the statesmanship of Moses to the exclusion of Divine participation but this does not account for the remarkable manner in which the promises and warnings of the Covenant were fulfilled centuries afterward. Throughout Israel's national history faithfulness brought prosperity and apostasy brought adversity, precisely as Moses had told them. The terrible description of their final scattering among the nations of the earth and the loss of their homeland in Deuteronomy 28 was realized to the letter fifteen hundred years later. This was a period of experience for the emerging nation, experience of the surety of Divine law and the inevitability of retribution if that law is infringed. For the first four centuries of their occupation of the land Israel existed as a fairly loose federation of tribes owning one God and one faith; more often than not one or another section of the nation broke away from God and adopted the idolatrous worship of the surrounding nations; speedily came the penalties of the forsaken Covenant upon them in war, invasion, crop failure, pestilence; each time the erring ones turned to the Lord in repentance and the curse was lifted. In a very material but eminently practical manner they began to learn the soundness of the maxim, *"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people"* (Prov. 14:34) and to know that *"whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he*

also reap" (Gal. 6:7). The second phase of their instruction came when the tribes formed themselves into a monarchy and desired a king to rule them in the manner of other nations. Five hundred years of kingship led them into disaster. Some kings were good men and influenced the people for righteousness but most of them were bad men and led their subjects into political and social and military adventures which culminated in the era of the captivities when the land was dominated by foreign invaders and many of the people taken as exiles into faraway countries. Those experiences at least taught Israel the folly of alliance with earthly kings and powers and brought them nearer to God than they had ever been before. *"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion"* (Ps. 137:1). Israel never relapsed into idolatry after the Babylonian captivity. At the Restoration under Cyrus of Persia they were more meticulous in observance of the Covenant and zealous for the law of God than at any previous time, although during the four centuries which thereafter elapsed to the coming of Christ that very passion for righteousness developed into a legalistic and formalistic conception of God's ways which produced the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time and led eventually to the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. The varied experiences of fifteen centuries had not been enough; they had not yet learned all that must be learned ere they could be ready for their destiny. Something more harrowing and soul-searching was necessary, and so it came about that less than forty years after the Crucifixion the prophetic words of both Jesus and Moses came terribly true. The Romans desolated the country, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, sold the women and children as slaves, sent the able bodied men to the galleys, and banished the greater part of the population from the land, to settle where they could among the nations, until *"the Times of the Gentiles,"* to use Jesus' words in Luke 21:24, *"be fulfilled."*

The remarkable thing about this nineteen centuries' Dispersion is that Israel never lost its identity. The Jew remained distinguishable throughout all generations and in all nations. He never lost his hope and belief that one day he would return to his own land. It is true, of course, that at no time during those nineteen centuries has the land been entirely without Jewish inhabitants; at all times there has been a remnant, sometimes a pitifully small remnant, inhabiting the land but always under the domination of some alien power -- Roman, Persian, Crusader, Moslem, Turk, and finally British. Although many of the dispersed settled down in their countries of adoption or refuge there was always the element which looked and worked for the day of return. "Next year in Jerusalem" was the constant prayer at their most solemn ceremonies. And in the late nineteenth century, with the appearance and work of Theodore Herzl, the political aspect of the age-old hope began to take concrete form.

The wresting of the Holy Land from the Turks by Britain during the 1914 war opened the doors to the Return -- slowly at first and beset by many obstacles, particularly Arab objections in the later years, but increasing steadily until in 1948 Britain, the last Gentile power to exercise control over the land, moved out, and the sovereign State of Israel was proclaimed, two thousand years from the days of the Maccabean priest -- kings when Israel had last known national independence.

So began the Great Restoration, political in its basis and nature, although many who hastened to return to the land of their fathers did so believing that the time had come for the purpose of God for their nation to take a great step forward. The powers of the world, and the man in the street, looking on, saw only another reshuffle of the ever-changing political map of the world and a perhaps not very permanent one at that. The God instructed Jew, and the instructed Christian also, knew it for what it was, the moving of Divine forces into position for the events that are to bring this world to an end and usher in the Age to come, the *"new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."* - 2 Peter 3:13.

Israel is being re-gathered in unbelief. Not that there is no religious element in the social and the governmental structure. There is, plenty of it. But the essence of Israel's uniqueness in the world has got to be its future complete dedication to God and reliance upon God and the corresponding rejection of the methods and particularly the weapons of this world. Despite certain signal manifestations of Divine deliverance in their ancient history -- the Red Sea, Jehoshaphat, Sennacherib and so on, that lesson has not yet been learned. Perhaps, in view of the tragic history of Israel during the past two millenniums, that is not altogether to be wondered at. But it has to be learned; until Israel as a nation has been purified and converted, trusting God implicitly for every kind of defense and protection, organizing its own life in accord with Divine standards, it will not be ready for the Divine purpose.

They come, from far, as the Old Testament prophets said they would. The old vigor and tenacity return as soon as they set foot upon the sacred soil, and the old arrogance. Not for nothing are those born in the land known as "sabras" -- the name means a prickly pear. The land is being restored and built up; the desert is beginning to blossom as the rose; their advances and discoveries in scientific and technical knowledge are beginning to spill over into the wider world to the greater benefit of man generally. Of old time Isaiah said, *"They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations"* (Isa. 61:4). They are doing all this, and nothing can stop them. Despite their continuing unbelief, God's hand is in this thing, for God's purpose is directly involved, and no one can fight against God.

One final time of stress is ordained, one last trial of faith, an event which will bring to the surface all the underlying devotion of which Israel is capable and leave them, at last, fully ready for their destiny. The continual progress and prosperity of Israel will excite the jealousy and antagonism of the wider world, and, perhaps, some dawning realization that this emerging nation is indeed, as the Bible has so consistently declared, the initial phase of the incoming earthly Kingdom of God which is to overcome all evil and institute everlasting righteousness. Whatever the reason, there will be a great coalition of evil powers and interests intent upon destroying Israel. Ezekiel (ch. 38-39) pictures this attempt under symbol of the eighth century B.C. invasion of the Middle East by the Scythians, Gog of the land of Magog and much people with him. Israel is pictured as defenseless so far as material weapons are concerned, but resting in faith that God will deliver -- and God does so deliver. That deliverance, and the vindication of Israel, and the overthrow of the "hosts of Gog," mark the time of Israel's complete conversion and acceptance of her destiny. *"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that time and forward"* is the prophet's comment on his account of this momentous event.

It is impossible to estimate the effect upon the world generally of a nation that is completely and altogether dedicated to the service of God and aflame with missionary zeal to extend its influence for righteousness throughout the world. This, under the direction of Christ and his Church in the heavens, is the mission of Israel. *"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Isa. 2:3). The purpose of the Messianic Age is the reconciliation of "whosoever will" to God and the bestowment upon them of eternal life; Israel will stand before the world as an example of a people converted to righteousness and, fully loyal to God. In their dedication to his service they will become a servant nation to all, that they might endeavor to win all. *"Thou, Israel, art my servant, the seed of Abraham my friend.... I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will give thee for a light of the nations, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house"* (see Isa. 41 and 42). Israel will, at the last, become a means in the Lord's hands for the salvation of the world.

- A. H. Hudson, Eng.

Daniel's Vision of World Governments

"As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." - Daniel 7:12.

The vision given to Daniel which he records in chapter 7 is of four beasts which, it was revealed to him, symbolized four kings (Daniel 7:16, 17).

The following are the leading points of the Vision and of the Interpretation respectively.

THE VISION

1. Four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.
2. The first like a lion, another like a bear, another like a leopard.
3. A fourth beast, dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly.
4. It was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.
5. There came up among them another little horn.
6. In this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.
7. The same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them.
8. *Until the Ancient of Days came, and*
9. Judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and
10. The time came that the saints possessed the *kingdom*.

The Interpretation

1. These great beasts which are four, are four kingdoms.
2. The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth.
3. The ten horns are ten kings (or kingdoms) that shall arise.
4. Another shall arise after them, diverse from the first (ten).
5. And he shall speak great words against the Most High.
6. He shall wear out the saints of the Most High;
7. They shall be given into his hand, until a time, and times, and the dividing of time.
8. *But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion.*
9. The kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;
10. Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

Students of the Scriptures have long understood these beasts to represent the four world-governments -- the only four mentioned by name in the Word of God -- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Dan. 2:38; 8:20; 8:21, and Luke 2:1). These four, as history shows, succeeded each other without any gap and, as the prophecies show, are to occupy the entire interval from Daniel's day to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.*

*See "The ABC of Bible Prophecy" booklet. Free on Request.

The foregoing is *very* generally understood. Not so general, however, is the understanding that the first three beasts continue alive long after they lose their dominion. Nevertheless this is clear from the language of Daniel 7:12. As each beast in turn is conquered by its successor, its *dominion* is taken away but its *life* is prolonged.

Just when the lives of the first three beasts come to an end is not stated. The implication is that this occurs when both the dominion and the life of the fourth beast are terminated (Dan. 7:26, 11).

This view, furthermore, agrees very well with the parallel prophecy recorded in the second chapter of Daniel. When the stone struck the image in the feet, "*then* was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces *together*" (Dan. 2:35)

In Daniel's vision it is probable that these four beasts emerged from the sea *one after another*, each in turn being vanquished by its successor. Eventually, however, all four must have been present to his view *at the same time* since, while the *dominion* of the first three had been taken away, their *lives* had been prolonged. How is this distinction between the *life* and the *dominion* of the beasts to be understood, as it relates to the four world -- empires symbolized?

To us it seems that there is only one satisfactory explanation. It lies, as has been pointed out by an able writer, in recognizing "that prophecy regards the four empires as being as distinct *in territory as in time*: as distinct in geographical boundaries, as in chronological limits. They rise in a definite sequence; the supreme dominion of one does not in point of *time* overlap the supreme dominion of the following one, nor is the *territory* of a former 'beast' or empire ever regarded as belonging to a later one, though it may have been actually conquered. Each has its own proper theatre or body, and the bodies continue to exist after the dominion is taken away. This is distinctly stated, both in connection with the fourfold image and with the four beasts. In the first case the stone falls upon the clay and iron feet only, but the iron legs, the brazen body, the silver breast, and the golden head, are all by it 'broken to pieces *together*.' Now the *empires* represented by these have long since passed away. They (as universal empires) cannot therefore be 'broken to pieces' by the Second Advent. But the *territory* once occupied by them is still existing and still populous, and exposed to the judgments of the day of Christ just as much as Rome itself.

"Similarly, we read that the three earlier beasts did not cease to *exist* when the fourth arose. 'Their *dominion* [was] taken away, yet their *lives* were prolonged for a season and time' (Dan. 7:12). That is to say, the first three empires are regarded as coexisting *with the fourth*, after their *dominion* has ended. This proves that they are regarded as *distinct in place* as well as in time. They continue to be recognized as territorial divisions of the earth after the disappearance of their political supremacy." - H. G. Guinness.

Many years before Guinness, this had been clearly seen by the world's great mathematician, Sir Isaac Newton. In his "*Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*," he wrote: "All the four beasts are still alive, though the dominion of the first three be taken away. The nations of Chaldea and Assyria are still the first beast. Those of Media and Persia are still the second beast. Those of Macedonia, Greece, Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt are the third beast. And those of Europe on this side are still the fourth beast. Seeing, therefore, the body of the third beast is confined to the nations on this side of the river Euphrates, and the body of the fourth beast to the nations on this side of Greece, we are to look for all the four heads of this third beast on this side of the Euphrates, and for all the eleven horns of the fourth beast among the nations on this side Greece; and therefore, in the breaking up of the Greek empire into four kingdoms, we include no part of Chaldea, or Media and Persia in these kingdoms, because they belong to the

body of the first two beasts. Nor do we reckon the Greek empire, seated at Constantinople, among the horns of the fourth beast, because it belongs to the body of the third."

This principle of identifying governments not only chronologically but geographically -- in accordance with the territory *originally* occupied-is helpful in reaching a proper understanding not only of this prophecy but of others. As above noted, it has proven a safe guide in the identification of the ten horns (or kingdoms) of the fourth beast (or empire) which must "none of them be sought in the realms of the third, second, or first, but exclusively *in the realm of the fourth*, or in the territory *peculiar to Rome*, and which had never formed part of the Grecian, Medo-Persian, or Babylonian empires."

There is yet one other point which ought to be mentioned ere we close this discussion. It is this: Not only is each world-government regarded in the prophecy as distinct in territory and in time; *each is shown also as existing before its predecessor falls*. Medo-Persia existed *before* it conquered Babylon. Greece came into existence *before* it challenged and overcame Medo-Persia. Rome existed *before* it vanquished Greece. Has this point any special significance? Indeed it has. It suggests that *before* the dominion of Rome is taken *away-before* the beast is slain and its body given to the burning flame, *the fifth world empire comes into existence*.

However, this thought, that the fifth world-empire comes into existence *before* the overthrow of the fourth, is more than a suggestion; much more than a strong probability based on the fact that each of the others is shown as existing before the fall of its predecessor. It is specifically stated in the Scripture. It is "*in the days*" of these kings, not after their days, that the God of heaven is to set up his Kingdom (Dan. 2:44).

Brethren, unless we greatly err, the God of heaven has for years been in the process of setting up this Kingdom. For more than half a century the "judgment has been sitting" and his dominion (the dominion of the fourth beast in its "little horn" stage) has been in the process of being taken away. What yet remains? We answer: "To consume and destroy that dominion unto the end." Immediately thereafter will occur that which, is described by the words: "I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:26; 11). And then? Ah! then-the Kingdom will be given to One like the Son of Man; and the people of the saints of the Most High. That Kingdom will not pass to a sixth world-empire. It will be everlasting (Dan. 7:14, 27).

- P. L. Read

Unwaning Treasure

Midst all the things which change and pass and perish,
The blessings which so oft seem growing dim,
How good it is to calmly, truly cherish
The treasure which is ours in having Him.

His love unchanged throughout the years abideth,
When other loves have changed or passed away;
No aching, breaking heart in Him confideth
But finds its night of sorrow turned to day.

His care, His wondrous care, is wrapped around us;
Nor grows He weary though we oftentimes fall;
His mercies, like His mercy, they surround us;
He bends a listening ear whene'er we call.

Ah, yes, we have in Him unwaning treasure --
Forgiveness, love, compassion, matchless grace;
May it be ours to give Him back some pleasure,
As daily in His will our steps we trace.

- J. Danson Smith

Our Safety in the Last Days

"Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." - Psalm 119:117.

THE "LAST DAYS" are specifically mentioned in the Scriptures. There are many "signs" or events by which we can identify the "last days" as the time in which we now live. The Prophet Daniel designates this period as "the time of the -end," at which time "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." The Apostle Paul names these days as "perilous times," "evil days," etc. St. Peter and St. Jude say that "there shall come in the last days scoffers" or mockers.

Our Lord speaks of this same period as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (chapters 24 and 21, respectively). According to Luke, Jesus spoke of events marking the last days thus: "On earth anguish among the nations in their bewilderment at the roaring of the sea and its billows; while men's hearts are fainting for fear, and for anxious expectation of what is coming on the world. For the forces which control the heavens will be disordered" (Luke 21:25, 26, *Weymouth*).

This being true, the question concerning our safety in these "perilous," "hard," or "critical" times, is very important. Since we are in the world, this present evil world, though not of it, some of us may be subjected to trials and difficulties similar to those through which the world in general will have to pass. The Apostle Peter says: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try 'you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12).

Referring to this same time, which is designated as the last days, the Prophet Malachi (3:1-3) asks these questions: "Who shall *abide* the day of his coming? Who shall *stand* when he appeareth?" Where do we, the followers of the Lord, *abide*, and where do we *stand*? Let us remember the words of our Master: "*Abide in me*. ... He that *abideth in me* and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-6). Abiding in Christ and being "found in him" is the only safe place for the Christian in time of trouble.

In Psalm 91:1 we read: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall *abide* under the shadow of the Almighty." These words of the Prophet are applicable to the Lord's consecrated saints, living daily in communion and fellowship with their Lord, the Good Shepherd, who, speaking concerning our safety, uttered these words: "My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, nor shall any one wrest them from my hand" (John 10:27, 28, *Weymouth*).

Now let us consider the second question the Prophet has set before us: "Who shall *stand* when he appeareth?" Where do we stand? The following quotations from the Scriptures will give us the answer:

"Watch ye, *stand fast in the faith*, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the *Gospel* . . . *wherein ye stand*" (1 Cor. 15:1).

"By whom also we have access by faith into this *grace wherein we stand*, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1).

"So then, brethren, *stand firm, and hold fast to the teachings* which you have received from us [the inspired Apostles], whether by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess. 2:15, *Weymouth*).

"Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so *stand fast in the Lord*" (Phil. 4:1).

"Only, do lead a life that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Whether I come and see you or only hear of you in absence, let me know you are *standing firm in a common spirit*, fighting side by side like one man for the faith of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:27, *Moffatt*).

Indeed, in all the above quoted texts are beautiful words of life, admonishing us to be firm, steadfast, unmovable, firmly rooted, and grounded in faith. Not passive or inactive, but "always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Nevertheless, while we, as good soldiers of Christ, are "fighting side by side like one man *for the faith of the gospel*," "earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," we will not be entirely free from danger. Knowing this, the Apostle says: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

To his disciples Jesus said: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). His followers are invited also to "overcome, even as he overcame." (See Rev. 3:21.) No one could be an overcomer unless there was opposition, something to overcome. And in order to overcome, we need faith, real faith, strong faith; for it is faith that overcometh the world. The surest way to overcome our opposers is to quote Scriptures and explain God's Plan in a loving and understandable manner. The best answer is: "Thus saith the Lord," or, "It is written."

In Isaiah 26:2 we read: "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in." To keep the truth, means to regard it as something precious, valuable; it means to guard it, to observe, and to defend it. If we will guard the truth, the truth will also guard us. The Apostle Peter tells us that we "are kept [safeguarded] by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). Again this mighty power of God that safeguards and sanctifies us is the Gospel Truth (John 17:17; Rom. 1:16).

The Psalmist, who knew the safeguarding power of God and relied on it, said: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. 4:8). So sure was he of the Lord's safekeeping power, that in Psalm 121: 4 he writes: "Behold, He that keepeth [safe guardeth] Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep."

In Deuteronomy 33:12 we read: "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." These beautiful and heart-cheering words were prophetic, and may well be applied to the "beloved of God" during this Gospel Age; and particularly now, in the "last days," when God's protection and safeguarding is needed more than ever before. Note well the gracious words: "*and the Lord shall cover him all the day long.*" The Psalmist (91:4) says: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust." Here is our sure and safe refuge, a mighty fortress, a Rock that is "higher than I:'

In Proverbs 18:10 it is again written: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." How fortunate and how glad are we because we know who is the "strong tower" - the "name of the Lord." If the Lord had not revealed these things to us, we could

not "run into it" and find refuge and safety. It is necessary to know and to accept the truth; to rely upon and to trust in God's promises, knowing that they will come to pass in his own due time. To acquire this knowledge of our place of refuge, and where and when to "run into" this safe hiding place, requires some effort on our part. This is in harmony with the words of the Apostle James (James 4:8) "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

Again, in Proverbs (Prov. 3), the necessity of following the wisdom from above is linked with the safety and well-being of the man of God. In Prov. 3:21-23 we read: "Keep sound wisdom and discretion [divine instruction]: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." Valuable words of divine instruction are found again in Prov. 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

The same Prophet of the Lord, in Proverbs 29:25, again gives us sound words of wisdom: "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

Having therefore before us such wholesome words of divine wisdom and instruction, let us remember, dearly beloved, that we are constantly reminded to watch, to be alert, to walk circumspectly, for the days are evil. Let us always be attentive and obedient to the voice of the Good Shepherd. Let us carefully study his Word of Truth and let us daily endeavor to apply his instructions to our lives, remembering that faith "without works is dead." "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

- J. R. Muzikant

The Question Box

John 13:34

Question:

In John 13:34 we read: "A new commandment. I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." In what sense was this commandment new?

Answer:

It was not new in the sense that a command to love had never before been given. Such a commandment "was written in the very constitution of Adam and Eve." (See *Scripture Studies*, Vol. VI, page F350.) Moreover, love to one's neighbor is enjoined in the Old Testament. (Lev. 19:18.) But the law of love which Jesus here gave was new in two senses: (1) It was to be a love *for one another*, and, (2) they were to love one another *as Jesus had loved them*. Let us briefly consider his commandment from these two points of view.

1. They were to love one another.

The love here enjoined was not a love which was to apply to the entire human race (as in the case of the law of love written in the constitution of the first man), nor was it to be especially applicable to the members of the nation of Israel, as might be said of the law of love stated in Leviticus. It was given (not to all men, nor yet to Israel, but) to the footstep followers of the Master. It was to embrace them all, but only them. Moreover the earlier laws of love were not thereby repealed, even for them. This constitutes an additional obligation.

This commandment, therefore, was new in that it was to commence from a new center, even from Jesus himself; and was to embrace an entirely new circle -the Church. It would thus be suited to new circumstances. The Church which is his Body was about to be founded, and love was to be the mighty influence animating its members, the powerful bond uniting the members of that Body to each other and to Jesus, their Head. His Body-members, united to each other in love, were to be his love bearers to the world. To the world the constant love which would be seen in the relationship of the members of the Church to each other would be taken as a proof of their discipleship. "By *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love *one to another*." - *Verse 35*.

2. They were to love one another "as I [Jesus], have loved, you."

Scholars tell us that the Greek word here translated "as" means more than a simple comparison; it indicates a conformity, and characterizes the mutual love of Christians as *being of the same nature as that which unites Jesus to his footstep followers*, each returning to his brother the love with which Jesus loves him.

When our Lord gave them this new commandment he was within a few hours of his death. His love for them, which had always been strong and unremitting, had never been greater. "Having loved his own which, were in the world, he loved them *unto the end*." (Verse 1.) If, therefore, their love was to be in conformity with his, it would mean a willingness on their part to suffer for their brethren similarly, even unto death, and this conclusion is actually drawn by St. John in his

first epistle. There, in chapter 3, verse 16, he says: 'Because he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren..''

There is an instructive paragraph on this question from the pen of Brother Russell in *Reprints*, page R4549. We quote: "The 'New Commandment' represents a higher law than was given to the Jew under the Law Covenant,; hence higher also than will be given to Israel and mankind under the New Covenant. The New Commandment mentioned by our Lord is not the Father's commandment at all, but the command of our Head, our Teacher, to all those who have entered the school of Christ and who are hoping to become 'members' of the Anointed One -- members of the Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King of the new dispensation. Justice could not give this, new command; all that justice could command is expressed in the law given to Israel, namely, supreme love of God and love for the neighbor as for one's self. This new commandment which the Lord gave applies only to the Church of this Gospel Age. In effect it is this: If you would be my disciples, if you would share my throne and glory and immortality, you must have my spirit. You must do more than keep the Law. You must be more than just. You must be self sacrificing. If you would share my glory, I command and direct that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12.) I have loved you to the extent of laying down my life for you sacrificially. You must have this same spirit and cast in your lot with me in self sacrifice, or you cannot be my disciples, nor share my glory, and associate in my work as the Mediator for the blessing of Israel and mankind. Whosoever will be ray disciple must take up his cross; and follow me, that where I am there shall my disciple be. Surely no one can doubt the Savior's meaning-my disciples must die with me."

Our Lord's new commandment was most loyally obeyed. And the flame of this entirely new affection on earth, streaming forth from the holy fires burning: in the early Church, proved a most mighty influence in the spread of the Gospel. And we, too, are determined, are we not, that our fellowship shall be similarly attested; that men shall be constrained to say of us, as of them: "See how these Christians love one another!"

- P. L. Read.

British Correspondent

In recent months Brother John Thompson has written advising that, because of increasing opportunities of service in other branches of the ministry, he believes he should relinquish the duties and privileges of service as our British Correspondent, as soon as a suitable successor could be found.

It has been a source of much satisfaction to us to have had the fine cooperation of Brother Thompson for the past five years. We can only wish him well in his expanding fields of Christian endeavor. Meantime, we are glad to inform our British subscribers that, in his last letter, Brother Thompson tells us that he has been successful in securing the services of another brother, who is not only favorably known to himself but also to other brethren in various parts of the British Isles-especially in the London area. The brother's name and address are given below:

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