

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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The Magnificat

"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: amid the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." - Luke 1:30-33.

FOR OUR Christmas meditation we have selected the words recorded in Luke 1:46-55. These, the exalted utterance of a humble Jewish maiden, were invoked by the inspired greeting of her kinswoman. For, "it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? And, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." - Luke 1:41-45.

Moved by the deepest emotion, Mary breaks out in an ecstatic rhapsody, the Magnificat. Like Miriam, Deborah, Hannah; or Judith, she utters a song of joy. In the words of Geikie: "The whole hymn is a mosaic of Old Testament imagery and language and sows a mind so colored by the sacred writings of her people that her whole utterance becomes, spontaneously, as by a second nature, an echo of that of prophets and saints. . . Mary, like them, must have, lived in a constant realization of the presence and special providence of One with whose gracious communications to her people she had thus filled her whole thoughts. A Jewish puritanism, of the loftiest and most spiritual type, must have been the very atmosphere in which she moved, and in which her child was hereafter to be trained." Truly, "all generations shall call her blessed."

However, it is not the Virgin mother's person but rather the spiritual emotion and eloquence of her Magnificat that is our immediate concern and to which we now turn for detailed consideration. Each exulting strain of that song which anticipated the first Christmas will refresh

our spirits as we recall our own cause for joy and gratitude to, "the Giver of every good and perfect gift."

"SING FORTH THE HONOR OF HIS NAME"

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."
- Luke 1:46, 47.

How natural for her mind, imbued with its religious heritage, to raise itself in adoration of her God. The intimation made to her was one which she could hardly grasp in, its full significance. Her Son was to sit upon the throne of His father David, and reign over the house of Jacob, founding a kingdom which should endure for ever. The gratitude within, welled forth in notes of heartfelt praise. And to us who know the full significance of that wonderful event, Mary seems to speak in the Psalmist's words: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Our echoing words of praise have already been written for us: "Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in, the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all.. Both riches and honor come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might and in Thine hand- it is to make,, great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name." We may all say: "My soul shall be joyful in the, Lord: it shall rejoice in His salvation." - Psa. 34:3; 1 Chron. 29:10-13; Psa. 35:9.

"WHO REMEMBERETH US IN OUR LOW ESTATE"

"For He hath regarded the low estate] of His handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call-me blessed." -- Ver. 48.

For centuries had the pious women of Israel each cherished the hope that of her might be born the long promised Deliverer. And now this incomparable honor, worthy of the greatest Queen, had become the lot of this humble maid. Well might she rejoice at the goodness of God. And is it not so with us? What shall we say as we consider our own even greater portion? Hath not the Lord considered our "low estate"? "For ye 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 weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, bath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that, no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and deliverance: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:26-31.) As of our glorious Forerunner it is written (Psa. 72:17), "All nations shall call Him blessed," so of those "born in Zion" we read: "Blessed and holy is he that bath 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." - Rev. 20:6.

"THE LOVING KINDNESS OF GOD"

"For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation." - Ver. 49, 50.

God had thus favored Mary because she feared (reverenced) Him, for His mercy is on such, from generation to generation. We marvel at her calmness and poise at the strange announcement of the angel. Her answer is the ideal of dignified humility, and meek and reverend innocence: -- "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." We echo Elisabeth's words: "Blessed is she that believed."

As we turn to consider our own portion in the Lord's inheritance it is with the joyful testimony: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." For have we not prayed to Him-"Show me Thy Ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Thy mercy remember Thou me, for Thy goodness sake, O Lord." - Psa. 25:4-7.

And did He not hearken to us? "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." (Psa. 34:6.) "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He bath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." - Psa. 40:1-5:

"THE LORD'S ARM EXALTED"

"He hath showed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the , imagination of their hearts." - Ver. 51.

What a depth of wisdom lies hidden in these words, far beyond their primary significance to the humble soul that uttered them. She had indeed been told that her child, from its birth, should be called the Son of the Highest, and 'the Son of God. But the human mind is slow to grasp great truths, and needs to grow into a comprehension of their meaning: it cannot receive them in their fulness till it has been educated, step by step, to understand them. Long years after this she only partially realized the import of such words. In her Son's youth she was perplexed to know what was meant by His answer (Luke 2:50), when He stayed behind in the Temple; and years after that she failed, once again, to realize her true relations to Him. (John 2:4.) Nor does she seem to have risen to the full sublimity of her position, and of His, while He lived, though the deathless love of a mother for her child brought her to the foot of the Cross. - John 19:25.

Not so with us, however, to whom the "Arm of the Lord" has been revealed. We have grasped the full import of that birth in Bethlehem and recognize in Him "the Dayspring from on high that hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78, 79.) "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, bath gotten Him the victory." (Psa. 98:1.) "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." - Psa. 118:15, 16.

MESSIAH OF NATHAN'S LINE

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away." - Ver. 52, 53.

Through His Prophet Jeremiah God had said: "Behold the day is coming, that I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper. In His days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name that Jehovah proclaimeth Him, Our Righteousness." - Jer. 23:6, Young's translation.

This Branch had been expected to be a lineal descendant of David through the royal line of Solomon, but a comparison of various Scriptures proves this not to have been the Lord's will, inasmuch as Solomon is shown to have subsequently lost God's favor. (See Psa. 132:11; 1 Chron. 28:5-9; 1 Kings 2:4; 1 Kings 11:9-13.) Consequently we find that our Lord's descent from David is through the humbler line of Nathan as traced by Luke (3:31) who styles Joseph "the son of Heli," that is, the son-in-law of Eli. By birth, Joseph was the son of Jacob, as stated in Matthew 1:16. By inspiration Mary expresses this truth in her song of thanksgiving: "He hath *put down the mighty* from their seats, and exalted them of *low degree*." The diadem and crown were removed from Zedekiah, the last king of the line of Solomon, to be given, to him of the line of Nathan whose right it is -- the Son of David who also is his Lord.

We also, dear brethren, have been the recipients of grace because of the rejection of those whose primary portion it was. For it is written: "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity: but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Rom. 11:7, 22.), "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. 2:11-13.) "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people." - Psa. 113:5-8.

"GOD'S PROMISES SURE"

"He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." - Ver. 54, 55.

Two thousand years.. had elapsed since God's great promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations would be blessed. With prophetic insight Mary recognizes a decisive step in the fulfilment of God's unchanging purpose, and closes her song on this note of joy. Later, when her babe was born, the aged Simeon who had also waited for the "Consolation of Israel," took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,, according to Thy word:, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; alight to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." - Luke 2:29-32.

Today we have reached a crucial period in the history of the world. The lofty spiritual sentiments of the Magnificat find little real response in the weary hearts of men. In this day of crass materialism, faith in God is well-nigh extinct. Men do not look to Him for help in their present world-wide distress. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a

new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Pet. 3:13.) In the not far distant future there is to be a stupendous change in this earth's affairs and the astonished masses of mankind will be hold the full realization of the glorious hope breathed forth in the song of the humble maid of Nazareth -- "Great joy which shall be unto all people." Again shall be heard those words of the heavenly host, now to be echoed by all humanity:

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST,

ON EARTH, PEACE, GOOD WILL TO MEN."

- *W. J. Siekman.*

"In Due Time"

In Thy due time, our Heavenly Father, shall be known
Thy gracious plan, which now is hid,
Except unto Thy saints alone.
O, glorious day, when Thine all-wisdom, justice, power and love,
The whole creation shall approve!

In His due time, O, blessed Jesus,
Thou shalt see The travail of Thy soul, and shalt
Be satisfied eternally;
Thine agony on Calvary -- the price that Thou didst give,
Shall cause the dead again to live!

In God's due time, O, pilgrim on the "narrow way,"
Thy painful journey ended, darkest
Night shall turn to brightest day;
Thine every trial, then, thine every tear, shall prove a gem
To beautify thy diadem!

In His due time, O, weary, groaning, sin-cursed Earth.
The Lord will wipe away thy tears,
And bring the promised "second birth";
And there shall be no pain, nor any death in that blest day
When sin and sorrow flee away!

In His due time, angelic choirs shall sing again
In grander strain that heavenly message,
"Peace on earth, good will toward men!"
And every knee shall bow, and every loving heart confess
The Christ who comes to reign and bless!

- G. W. Seibert

Thanksgiving for the Coming Kingdom

"Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." - Isaiah 60:18.

THIS is one of the songs in which Isaiah thanks God for the Age to come. "In that day," as he tells us in another place, "this song shall be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (Isa. 26:1). "In that day," a phrase which he repeats perhaps forty times, "thou shalt say: O Lord, I will praise thee." - Isaiah 12:1.

Usually thanksgiving is retrospective. The word remembrance is a natural companion for the word thanksgiving. Already we have all doubtless been looking back and praising the way God has led us day by day since Thanksgiving season of a year ago. But our text suggests another cause of thankfulness -- the Coming Kingdom. If our faith finds God in the past record of our lives, that is much. If it sees God in the future, that is even more. All of us should have within ourselves the thanksgiving of a historian, recounting God's mercies of the past that have been preserved within our memories. Our hearts should also be in tune with the thankfulness of the Prophet Isaiah, as he contemplates the glories of the Age to come.

When was this gracious promise to be fulfilled? When did the Prophet *expect* to see it fulfilled? If, as we think, it was Isaiah who wrote this promise, he doubtless expected that it would have a partial fulfillment when the Jewish captives were restored to the land of their fathers, following the captivity -- the great Babylonian Captivity--which, as the Lord's Prophet, he had informed Hezekiah would surely take place (2 Kings 20:16-18). And even if it should prove to be the case, as others think, that this promise (Isa. 60:18) was written by a later, a second Isaiah, the *expected* partial fulfillment would not be different. In either case, the partial fulfillment should be looked for on the return from the Babylonian captivity.

And in some measure, insofar as those Jews would permit, it *was* fulfilled in their experience. Their governor, Ezra, was a man of peace. Their chief magistrate, Nehemiah, was a friend and servant of righteousness. And though the tribes and nations around them raged against them, and took counsel together how they might destroy them, yet again and, again, because God was with them, their wall was their salvation, and songs of deliverance were heard in their gates. If the *fullness* of the promised blessing never came upon them, it was because they would not fulfill the inevitable conditions of the promise; because they did not love righteousness, because they did not seek peace and pursue it, because they would not have God to reign over them.

WHY DO NATIONS RISE AND FALL?

Isaiah, however, was a *prophet*. Because of this we cannot suppose he was looking forward only or mainly to the outward and temporary conditions of this people. He was looking chiefly to their inward--their moral and spiritual--state, after the manner of a prophet. The Hebrew prophet, we know, was a forth-teller rather than a fore-teller. He was acquainted with God and knew the moral principles which underlay God's dealings with the nations -- especially with Israel. Righteousness, he knew, tended to exalt a nation; and just as certainly unrighteousness had the opposite tendency (Prov. 14:34). Looking back over the pages of history, who cannot see this principle manifested in the rise and fall of nations? The scoffer may say that God is on the side of the heaviest battalions, and no doubt he can cite specific instances to prove his point. But the history of nations clearly testifies that God does not long remain on the side of a wicked nation, no matter how heavy its battalions, or how many. Such a nation begins to slide and totter. Before long it

ceases even to have the heaviest battalions. A drunken nation pawns its assets in the markets of the world just as surely as does a drunken man. The process may take a little longer, and he who cannot see the trend may be deceived. But when Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome get unsound hearts, they are on their way to dissolution; when Israel forsakes righteousness, she is on her way to captivity; should the United States depart from the principles providentially written into its constitution by our founding fathers, principles clearly enunciated in God's Word, it will be taking the road which leads to destruction.

From the time when God had said to Abram, "I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward," the patriarchs and prophets of Israel, musing on things to come, had habitually anticipated a time when all people should be lovers of righteousness and lovers of peace; a time, therefore, in which God would be their shield and their salvation, whatever the dangers to which they might be exposed, and would make them rich, whatever they lost. Like Abraham, too, they had learned from the very disappointment of their earthly hopes, to look for a better country, in which the righteous would dwell securely. And hence, throughout the *Gospel Age*, Isaiah's promise has been read, and properly read, as more than a promise to Israel as a promise to *all men* -- as pointing onward to the Kingdom of Christ, that most true home and refuge of every righteous man, that secure asylum for the lovers and makers of peace.

PRESENT APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH

Moreover, while the promise is for natural Israel restored, and through Israel the whole world of mankind, in the Millennial Age, its underlying teaching is seen to apply to the Gospel Age Church. For some of us have learned, and others are beginning to learn, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other things will be added unto us according to our need of them. We have learned, or we are beginning to learn, that if men are really lovers of righteousness and lovers of peace, God is in very deed their Refuge and will become their Song. We, the Gospel-Age Church -- under a covenant of sacrifice to suffer with him -- do not ask, we do not expect, to dwell in a fortified city which no adversary or apparent adversary can approach, to sit within gates and behind walls which will secure us from every stroke of change and sorrow and loss. God has provided some better thing for us than that. He *himself* has become our Salvation and our Shield--he who can compel every change to minister to our welfare, and turn all our sorrows into joy. For such creatures as we are, in such a world as this, to be put beyond the reach of loss and grief and change would be but a doubtful good; nay, it would be a very obvious and indubitable harm, for it would rob us of the very discipline by which we are confirmed in righteousness, and driven to seek for peace (not in the fluctuations and transitions of outward life, but) in the quiet and indisturbable depths of a mind stayed on God and conformed to his will. And who can doubt that it is good for us to know that we are secure *amid* the shocks of change, the blows of loss, the chastisements of grief; to know that none of these things can by any means harm us, that they can only minister to our welfare, since they are all the servants of him in whom we put our trust. God himself has become our Salvation and our Strength; and if our walls are Salvation, should not our gates be Praise?

Rightly read then -- read in the sunshine of that Gospel which was revealed to patriarch and prophet, but is much more fully revealed to us, these ancient words of promise throw a bright flood of hope over our life, the life that now is, the life we live in the flesh. They teach us where we may find an impregnable and fearless Security *amid* all the insecurities of time, where we may find a joy unspeakable and inexhaustible *amid* all its sorrows, where we may find a sacred and unbroken Peace *amid* all its conflicts and cares.

FUTURE LITERAL FULFILLMENT TO ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

This we take to be the deepest and richest meaning of the Promise -- deepest and richest because the most inward and spiritual. But we ought not to close this Thanksgiving meditation without pausing long enough to note that the promise is to have a very literal fulfillment here on earth. Israel, and through Israel the whole world of mankind--all the willing and obedient -- will reach a country eventually in which Violence shall be no more heard, and Wasting and Destruction shall be unknown; a city, the walls of which shall be Salvation and its gates Praise. The restored earth will itself become a literal paradise. St. John, in the Book of Revelation, takes up the wondrous tale sung by Isaiah, and carries it to a still more wondrous close. As he gazes upon the new heaven and the new earth which are to succeed the former, he says: "I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem,* coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." - Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1-4.

*Not the old literal city rebuilt, but the new spiritual city.

St. John goes on, as you know, to describe the heavenly City in figures drawn from all that is most precious and beautiful and splendid among the "former things" -- from fountains and rivers, trees and mountains, gold and gems, sun and moon, pressing them all into his service as he labors to depict the pure and glorious conditions of the life of the new City in the new Age. However we may understand his symbols, and they are, of course, only symbols, no one can read his words, glowing with color, radiant with light, without becoming aware that he is predicting an utter and most blessed change in all outward conditions on this earth for Israel and all the other redeemed nations to enjoy. For us, the Church, it doth not yet appear what we shall be; we do but know (and in this blessed knowledge rest content) that when our Lord Jesus doth appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2). Unless we greatly err, we are, with him, to constitute this fair and wondrous City, symbolic of the new government -- God's Kingdom -- then to assume control of earth's affairs.

As yet we may not fully know all that may be implied in the wall of jasper, great and high, on whose twelve foundations are inscribed the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb; or in the twelve gates, each a pearl, guarded by angels, and bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. But of this much we are confident: these and the other symbols related to this Holy City are intended to represent the glorious relationship that will exist between our Lord and his Church; and the various characteristics of God's new world order -- the government being centered in Christ and his Bride. It was for this Kingdom, this Government, that our Lord taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." For this glorious hope "Our thankful hearts, O God, we raise, and sing to thee our song of praise."

- P. L. Read

"Even the Winds and the Waves Obey"

"What manner of man is this? For even the winds and the waves obey him." - Matthew 8:27.

OUR text is taken from the Gospel narrative of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, during which Jesus was asleep in the hinder part of the vessel, until the sturdy seamen, appalled by the storm, cried to him, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Then the Savior arose and rebuked the storm; and there was a great calm. When the fishermen -- disciples beheld this they said, "What kind of person is this that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

We have great sympathy for the fellow-countrymen of Jesus who, failing to understand him, caused his execution, considering him a menace to their institutions. His wonderful words, his wonderful words of life, of which it is recorded that the public declared, "Never man spake like this man," and in general his wonderful personality seemed really incongruous with his general demeanor. Not claiming to be Jehovah, not claiming to be his own Father, as some now teach, but on the contrary declaring, "My Father is greater than I." He, nevertheless, claimed a special relationship to God; and this he demonstrated by such miracles as the one of our lesson. Had he done and said those things as a member of one of the popular sects of his day, he would have been revered. Had he joined in with the Pharisees and winked at their interpreting the Law in one way for the people and in another manner for themselves, he would have received much honor from the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant. But he antagonized all these by his humility in mingling with the common people, accepting some of them as his special disciples and sending them out as his representatives. This specially branded him as foolish in the eyes of the worldly-wise. This specially discredited him, not only as a man and a teacher, but particularly as one who claimed to be the Messiah, the King of Glory, who was to set up an Empire. We can well see why worldly-wise people of that day or this day would consider such a person a fraud, a pretender, a deceiver. Appearances were against him.

"ART THOU A KING THEN?"

Picture the Great Teacher walking with his twelve Apostles, a nondescript crowd of those who heard him gladly -- not many great, not many learned, not many rich, not many noble. Hear him telling them--those who acknowledged themselves to be ignorant and unlearned (Acts 4:13)--that, if faithful to him, he would grant them to sit with him in his Throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The statement surely seemed fraudulent; and he had not the heart to condemn the Jews who so misinterpreted him. St. Peter did not condemn them, but distinctly said, "I wot, brethren, that in ignorance ye crucified the Prince of Life, as did also your rulers." - Acts 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 2:7, 8.

Can we wonder that the learned Jews of that day were confused? They did indeed hear of his miracles--his recovering of sight to the blind and of strength to the withered hand of the impotent man; and, in the case of Lazarus, at least, they had demonstration of his power over the dead. They perceived that these miracles were having an influence upon the masses -- that they detracted from their own esteem among the people. They knew that many of Jesus' sayings were wonderfully wise, and that his criticisms of their own inconsistencies were remarkably sharp. Yet withal they said, "We know that he is a fraud, because of his peculiar claim to be the Messiah and the Son of God. This claim of his discountenances all of his teachings and mighty works. It cannot be true that he is the Messiah that our nation has waited for these more than sixteen centuries. God would surely send Messiah a sufficiency of demonstration of glory and power to

convince the most intelligent of our nation, the Scribes and Pharisees and Priests. What they all dissent from and denounce, must be false."

FOR THE GOOD OF THE NATION

The Jewish wise men of eighteen centuries ago concluded that a man who set the masses agog with anticipation of himself as the Messiah-King, yet who was without an army and without financial backing for a campaign, would present their nation to the Romans in a ludicrous light. As a result they might have taken from them at the word of the emperor the civil and religious privileges and rights they were enjoying. They took counsel and determined that in the interests of the peace of the nation this golden-tongued Miracle-worker should either be exposed as a fraud or be killed. They tried first to expose him by trapping him in his language in the presence of his followers and the multitude. But his intellect was keener than theirs; and the thrusts they made at him rebounded to their own discomfort and established his own standing in the estimation of his followers and in the eyes of the people. One of these efforts to show up the hollowness' of his claims and their fraudulency and to discourage his followers is worthy of particular notice, as it furnishes us the key to the sentiment of the rulers and also to the real facts of the case, which those rulers failed to discern.

"THE KINGDOM IN YOUR MIDST"

The influential Jews said, "Let us question this fraudulent Messiah respecting his pretentions, not with any hope of correcting him, but with a view to opening the eyes of his followers to the weakness and fallacy of his teachings. Then they will see the hollowness of the hopes they are entertaining and their foolishness in leaving their various avocations to become his followers, in the hope of sitting with him in his throne. They will see that he has no prospect of ever securing a throne, and that they are merely deluded by him in such expectations." They inquired of him, "When will your Kingdom appear? How long will it be before you sit upon your throne and have followers with you in the throne? How long before this Messianic Kingdom will rule in Palestine and extend from its borders to the ends of the earth? After you have answered us this question we will ask you others respecting your financial support and resources your own qualifications, and your subordinate officers; the arms for your soldiers and the supplies necessary for such a world campaign as you are about to begin, according to your teachings."

The great Teacher's brief answer entirely silenced every objection. His teachings, had these men been "Israelites indeed," would have been so deeply impressed upon them that they would have followed up the matter with an entirely different line of questioning than at first contemplated. But they were insincere. Hence when their questions, intended to entrap the Teacher and Master, were answered and foiled, they merely acknowledged their defeat by their silence. The answer was not, as imperfectly translated in our Common Version -- the Kingdom of Heaven is *within you*, hypocritical Pharisees, but, my Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven, of which I am the King, will not *appear* at all. It will be an invisible Kingdom -- it comes not with observation or outward show. Ye shall neither say, Lo, it is here, nor, Lo, it is there; for it will be everywhere in the midst of you, amongst you, invisible but all-powerful. - Luke 17:20-22.

Truly, what manner of man was this, and what manner of message and Kingdom was his, so different from anything the Jews had ever expected! Can we wonder that only a comparatively small proportion of them were in the heart attitude to receive this message respecting a spiritual Kingdom? We cannot wonder! Even his most intimate disciples did not grasp the depth of his teaching until after his death and resurrection they, at Pentecost, received the special enlightenment foretold. - Joel 2:29.

ISRAEL'S HOPES MERELY DEFERRED

Then understood they the true depth of the teachings of him who spake as never man spake. Then they comprehended that he was the Only Begotten Son of God who, in obedience to the Divine Program for Israel and the world, had left the Heavenly courts and glory of the spirit nature and been made flesh-"The Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Then they understood, not only that he was a perfect man, but that through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which came upon him at baptism, he was indeed God's Anointed, the antitypical Priest, antitypical Prophet and antitypical King-not that he was these in the flesh, but that the new spirit nature begotten in him through that anointing, was perfected in the resurrection, and that it is the glorified Christ on the spirit plane who will accomplish all the great things predicted through the Prophets, blessing all Israel and all nations, in God's due time. Then they understood the meaning of the Master's words to the Roman Governor, "My Kingdom is not of this Age; for if it were, then my servants would fight for me and I should not be delivered to death." Then they perceived that his Kingdom will be not the less real and powerful, but the more so, because a Heavenly one, a spiritual one, which, in due time, in the Age to come, will operate through the nation of Israel, just as was originally promised and expected.

The Apostles discerned that the hopes of their nation were not blasted, not destroyed, but will all have fulfillment, though the time of fulfillment was deferred. And we see two reasons for the delay:

(1) In order to make the Messianic blessing as great as God designed that it should be worldwide and unto eternal life -- it was necessary that a great sacrifice for sins should be made a sacrifice typed for centuries in Israel's Atonement Day sacrifices -- a sacrifice in two parts. These two parts are shown in Israel's Atonement Day-the bullock of the sin-offering and the Lord's goat of the sin-offering. Jesus himself fulfilled the first of these, the merit of which has been applicable to the saintly few of Jews and Gentiles who have, during this Gospel Age, made a full consecration to walk in the Redeemer's footsteps. The secondary part of the sacrifice, the offering of the goat, pictures the sacrificing company of the Lord's faithful disciples throughout this Age. These, under cover of his righteousness, suffer with him sacrificially. - Hebrew 13:11-13.

Their reward is to be a share with the Redeemer on the Heavenly, spirit plane, participating in his glory, honor, and immortality and in his great work of dispensing the Messianic blessing to Israel and the world.

How ashamed will all men be when the Times of Restitution mentioned by St. Peter (Acts 3:19-23) shall be ushered in! How astounded all will be at the goodness of God and his faithfulness in respect to all his promises! How the eyes of all humanity will look back to the days of Jesus in the flesh, when he appeared among men to lay a foundation for his glorious Messianic Kingdom by offering himself in sacrifice for the sins of all the people, that thereby he might purge from sin all who ever will come to the Father through him, and will thus have the right to restore the willing and obedient to full perfection and to destroy the rebellious in the Second Death. Ah, then all will know, as never before, the force of the words of our text, "What manner of man is this?" They will know him as having been a man, The Sent of God. They will know him as the now Highly Exalted One, far above men and angels, rewarded with the very highest reward which Jehovah could give to his Beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased and by whose stripes Israel and we all are healed.

- C. T. Russell

Fellowship Divine

"That they may be one, even as we are one." - John 17:22.

JOHN opens his first epistle in these words: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled ..." He speaks with authority, from knowledge not transmitted to him from another; it was directly experiential. It was real, and due to a close relationship. Was he not "that disciple whom Jesus loved"? Therefore he records what he had actually experienced concerning the Word of Life, which (as he elsewhere testifies) "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14.

And what marvels had John witnessed! The sick healed, the blind given sight, evil spirits driven out, water turned to wine, and thousands fed from little. He had heard from those lips the sermon on the mount and other "gracious words." He had witnessed the rebuke to the authorities, and seen the tears flow at Lazarus' tomb, and the subsequent miracle; then the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the spread forth branches, the shout, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Later, he saw the money changers driven from the temple, the sublime humility in that act of feet-washing, the agony of Gethsemane, the betrayal by a kiss, and the horror of those last hours as men spat upon, mocked, reviled, beat and crucified the submissive Sufferer. Afterwards he witnessed the burial, the empty tomb, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and finally the thrilling words of the angels: "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."

These memories were burned into the heart and mind of John. He *knew* that the One of whom he testified was none other than the Son of God! And so he continues in his epistle: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." A wonderful thought lies behind this word "fellowship." It is the thought of intimate relationship which cannot possibly be one-sided but mutually reciprocal. One does not fellowship with just any individual. We may cultivate some one's acquaintance, be often his guest, feel close personally, and even free to unburden to him details of our life. But true fellowship with such an one is still impossible unless there be the like response. *Hearts must blend!*

Thus it is with our God. We do not simply choose on our part that we will have fellowship with him. *He* must first "draw us." His invitation must come: "My son, give me thine heart." Our full surrender must follow. So the Apostle exhorts in Romans 12:1. Then God consecrates and sanctifies us to the end we might be "vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work." Thus we enter the condition where fellowship Divine becomes our blessed privilege.

Fellowship has been defined as "that sympathetic relationship which exists between two hearts in tune with each other. Heart responding to heart in deep harmonious vibrations which accord mutual delight."

"THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS"

Careful analysis of this definition emphasizes its truth. A spiritual analogy may be drawn from the phenomena of radio reception. Thousands of messages and melodies are being transmitted from stations over the world. But none are perceived without the proper instrument for receiving the signals. Delicate tuning is required to prevent distortion and to eliminate background noises which would mar the reception.

This is true also in spiritual things. Your heart and mine must be in tune with God's as an absolute first essential. A radio set, no matter how expensive and efficient, if not properly tuned to the signals, is useless. So also, whatever be our facilities for Bible study -- books, helps, contact with brethren -- none will suffice for true communion with our Heavenly Father, so vital to our spiritual life, unless first our hearts be in perfect attune with him.

And how careful must we be to eliminate all other "signals." The slightest turn of the radio knob brings in all sorts of extraneous noises. So in spiritual things, "background noises," which though they be but the harmless and innocent things of the world, may prove definite hindrances to full communion with God. The voice of the Adversary always awaits in the background with a powerful transmitter to distort our reception of the Father's voice. We cannot listen to the voice of God and to any other at the same time. One must be "tuned out."

"O! MAY No EARTH-BORN CLOUD ARISE"

Can our sweet relationship be always maintained? We may be certain that any interruption would be on our part, not on his. But why should we ever allow anything of time and sense to disrupt our communion with him who is the very source of our being?

"Father forgive the heart that clings
Thus trembling to the things of time,
And bid my soul on soaring wings
Ascend into a purer clime."

The Scripture speaks of "the sin which doth so easily beset us" -- the close-girding sin which affects us all. Though hid from our brethren, it cannot be concealed from him who searches the heart. "All things are open and naked before him with whom we have to do." And thus we would have it, for the consciousness of God's watchful eye makes for carefulness in our walk. Like the Psalmist, we cry: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

How patient is our God! "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth [tenderly loves] them that fear him." Regretfully, we, on our part, sometimes lack kindness and consideration with one another, and are not as ready as we might be in heeding the Apostle's injunction: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake bath forgiven you." Brethren, let us be ever more like our Father.

How deeply intimate can our relationship with God be? Our earlier definition said, "Heart responding to heart in deep harmonious vibrations which accord mutual delight." Some of our hymn writers have evidenced a remarkable insight into this fellowship, as for example, these well-known words:

"Lord, thou hast made thyself to me
A living bright reality;
More near to faith's vision keen
Than any earthly object seen;
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie."

"Than *any* earthly object seen"! This embraces every joy and pleasure the world can offer, and it can offer much. Perhaps the greatest are our human relationships. And how sweet these can be! The genuine love of father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter-what these mean to us needs no elaboration. Yet, from our Master come these searching words: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." How blest indeed are we if, from our hearts, we can truly testify that our beloved Lord is more to us than the sweetest tie of earth.

The early disciples witnessed the Master's wonderful relationship with the Father, and within them was quickened a burning desire to share this fellowship. We recall Philip's words: "Lord, show us the Father." In the 13th to the 16th chapters of John, Jesus reveals the sweetness of his Father's love and fellowship with himself, and in the 17th chapter we read his earnest prayer that *you* and *I* might share this oneness. For after a special petition for his immediate disciples, he continues: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

"I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS"

These sublime words plead for a fellowship Divine! Dear ones, are we experiencing it and fully aware of its pricelessness? If so, it will completely transform our lives. God's love is the greatest magnetic force in the Universe, with heights and depths illimitable and beyond our comprehension. We touch as it were, but its fringes. All that we know of it has come to us through his Son, the Expression of that love. This fact, to the Apostle Paul, was the most stupendous, the most absorbing thought in the world, and which interwove his life with that of Christ. "For me to live is Christ," he cries, and again, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Such intimate relationship with Christ may also be our portion, and increasingly so as we grow in appreciation of his love for us.

Are we truly *in love* with Christ, or is our feeling akin to infatuation? For this is as possible a condition in the spiritual realm as in the natural, where it often occurs. Two people meet, are mutually attracted, and seek often each others company. But incidents occur, their "love" fails the test, and is revealed as but a temporary infatuation.

For true love, no test is too severe. In fact, the greater the test, the stronger true love becomes. We read that Jesus, having loved his own, loved them *unto the end*, even to the sacrifice of his life for them. What of ourselves, who have recognized through the Word that "He is altogether lovely" and have accepted him as our personal Savior? When he in due time reveals to us our shortcomings and we see ourselves as we really are, does our ardor fade and be seen to be but a temporary infatuation? Or do we recognize in his illumination of our inner being the workings of

his true love which desires our transformation into his likeness to share his life throughout eternity?

It is not difficult to love one another if we truly love Christ. Our mutual love constrains to meeting with one another as frequently as possible, and this gathering of two or three in his name has the promise of his presence, whom we love. Our hearts are thus united in him "Whom having not seen we love; in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And we enter into the intensity of his great longing for his own: "Father, I will that they also whom thou has given me be with me where I am. That they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovest me before the world was." He desired his dear ones to be forever with him -- to share his love, his Name, his Throne. Dare we to aspire to such a height? Stupendous thought! yet it is written: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in [set on] him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." For then, with the Father and the Son, we shall enter into eternally blessed "Fellowship Divine."

- *S. Bodle*, Eng.

The Question Box

"Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." - John 7:52.

Question:

Will you please discuss John 7:52? Were the chief priests and the Pharisees right when they told Nicodemus that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet?

Answer:

The context shows that Jesus was being condemned without a hearing. In John 7:32 we read that the Pharisees and chief priests had sent certain officers to arrest Him. It seems that these officers had happened to come at a time when Jesus was speaking to the people. His words, as they listened, had been so persuasive, had contained so much evidence of truth, so much proof that He was from God, that the officers had been impressed and awed by Him and did not dare to take Him a prisoner. They returned without Him, saying, John 7:46, "Never man spake like this Man."

Instead of questioning the officers to ascertain what they had heard, whether they had been convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and, if so, on what evidence the Pharisees ridiculed the idea, saying, "Are ye also deceived?" At this point Nicodemus, who was one of them, reminded them that the law in which they boasted, but in which, alas, they did not delight, gave every man the right to a fair and impartial trial (Exod. 23:1, 2; Lev. 19:15, 16). His words were: "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and knoweth what he doeth?" In John 7:52 we read their reply: "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

If Nicodemus had followed their advice and had searched sufficiently, he would have found the chief priests and Pharisees in error. On this point we will content ourselves with quoting the Diaglott footnote to John 7:52, which reads:

"This conclusion [that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet] . . . was incorrect. Jonah was of Gathheper, in Galilee; see 2 Kings 14:25, compared with Joshua 19:13. Nahum was a Galilean, for he was of the tribe of Simeon, and some suppose Malachi was of the same place.

However, while they were wrong in saying that no prophet was of Galilean origin, they would have been correct had they limited their contention to the statement that the Messiah was not to come from that province. This point had been made already, by some of the multitude, in their discussions concerning our Lord. Their opinions are recorded a few verses earlier. We quote from verses 40 to 42:

"Many of the people, therefore, said: Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said: This is the Christ. But some said: Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"

The Scripture had, indeed, so declared. We quote:

Psa. 132:11

"The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne."

Jer. 23:5, 6

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called: The Lord our Righteousness."

Micah 5:2

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

These Scriptures, however, while making it clear that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David, and was to be born at Bethlehem, in Judea, contained nothing to conflict with the thought that the Messiah, having been born of David's line, at Bethlehem, could be removed therefrom to spend His early years elsewhere. Nor' do they offer the slightest suggestion that Messiah's ministry must begin at Bethlehem, or for that matter at Jerusalem, or at any other city of Judea. Had they been in the proper attitude of heart the members of the Sanhedrim would have examined the evidences. So doing they would have found that Jesus was a descendant of David and that He had been born in David's city, Bethlehem, even though it was also true that He had been brought up in Nazareth of Galilee. Moreover, by searching, they would have found a certain passage in Isaiah respecting Galilee, which found a striking fulfilment in the ministry of our Lord. It is found in Isaiah 9:2. There we read:

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

Who were the people referred to by Isaiah as those who "walked in darkness"? The previous verse supplies the answer to this question. They were the people of Galilee.

Isaiah, in the closing verses of chapter 8 and the first verse of chapter 9 had been predicting, first a time of trouble and then a time of joy, for Israel.

The pathway of trouble would be where no light would dawn; where they would suffer hunger, not only bodily hunger, but deep craving of heart for help that fails them and for relief which never comes. Their sufferings, he tells them, in Isa. 8:21, would be *so* great that they would curse both their earthly and their heavenly king. Later, however, all this gloom would be dispelled; the anguish of the nation would be removed.

Where did Israel experience the distress and darkness here predicted? Isaiah tells us, in considerable detail, in Isa. 9:1. First he mentions the land of Zebulun and Naphtali; then he continues his description of the region to which his prophecy refers by saying it was "by way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations." Let us read his account, beginning with Isa. 8:21 and ending with Isa. 9:1, using the American Revised Version, margin:

"And they shall pass through it, sore distressed and hungry; and it shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and turn their faces upward; and they shall look unto the earth, and behold distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and into thick darkness they shall be driven away.

"But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time hath He made it glorious; by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations."

The word "Galilee" means a "ring" or a "circle," and since in Isaiah's day the land was encircled by Gentiles, it was well named the Ring of the Gentiles, or the Galilee of the nations. Moreover, with many Gentiles dwelling also in their midst, and cut off, by this circle of Gentiles, from Judea, the great religious centre of their day, the people of Galilee were, as Brother Russell has observed in R4557, "in greater darkness than their brethren, in the very shadow of the death-darkness that was upon the Gentiles."

The people of Galilee, then, were the ones to whom Isaiah referred as those "who walked in darkness." Did the time ever come when these people saw a great light? Let an inspired writer supply the answer. We turn to Matt. 4:12-26:

"Now when He [Jesus] heard that John was delivered up He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum; which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the Prophet, saying,

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
Toward the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,
The people that sat in darkness Saw a great light;
And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death,
To them did light spring up."

But while Isaiah's prophecy found its *first* fulfilment in the earthly ministry of our Lord, in a large sense it has yet to be fulfilled. While the light did, indeed, shine brightly, at our Lord's first advent, the darkness comprehended it not. Only a few—just one here, one there—appreciated the light then or since. As a nation Israel rejected the Messiah. Blindness has continued upon her to this very day, and will continue "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (until the full number has been selected out of every kindred, tribe and nation, to complete the Gospel-Age Church). Then, the people "who walked in darkness," that is to say, the whole world of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, shall see "the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His beams." (Mal. 4:2, margin.) Already:

"We begin to see the dawning
Of that bright Millennial day;
Soon the shadows, weary shadows,
Shall forever pass away."

- P. L. Read.

Entered Into Rest

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