

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. LXII March / April, 1979 No. 2

Our Sacred Feast

"This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." - 1 Cor. 11:25, 26.

SOUL refreshing and precious truths are contained in these two of the many inspired texts bearing on the "Last Supper." As we review the several accounts of that memorable feast, the meditative spirit is at once carried back over the long intervening centuries and is seated at a table in an upper room, intimately associated with at least eleven men like ourselves, sharing with them in the surprises, the gentle rebukes of love, and is profoundly impressed with the strange actions and the heart stirring words of our Lord and Master. We hear his significant statement, "I have *longed eagerly* to eat this Passover *with you* before I suffer. (*Moffatt.*) Momentous words we *so* yearn to fully comprehend! And what if nearly twenty centuries have passed away since those words were uttered *in* that upper room? Had they been the utterance of any other than Jesus, they would today be little more than a faint echo and be meaningless to present generations; but the words of him who spake as never man may speak can never become any mere projected echo.

Who that has known in experience how divine love can draw to itself, and whose heart has been made more tender through the condescending grace of God, as Jesus revealed it in that upper room, can be otherwise than affected more and more by pondering, its many exhibitions and by taking to heart the lessons to be learned *in* that hallowed spot. Memory, mind, and will, having caught the meaning of the words, "this do *in remembrance of me*, can never forget that which is so blessed to remember, and to *daily* call to mind, for it was not only an hour of feasting, it was also an hour of never to be forgotten revelations of the heart of Jesus.

Then, too, it was not only a matter of asking us to employ this simple method of keeping his love in remembrance, but there was a further remark. He adds a still further measure to our cup of hope and joy by saying, that this feast is to last *only* "Till the day I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of my Father." This is a promise of another and greater feast. It speaks of a time when this present feasting, which is symbolic in its joy, will give place to a banquet of sublime,

celestial grandeur such as our loftiest language could never adequately express. Hence, Jesus is asking us to now join him in a beautiful perpetuation of a feast which, by its very simplicity and richness in hope, will keep fresh and ever green in our affections the reality of his unchanging love, and enable us to continually share with him the joy of unfading anticipations of the eternal feast to come.

But the Apostle would have us pause *for* a moment to make an examination. Perhaps he remembers something that was all too apparent in that upper room where the farewell feast was first instituted. He would have us keep in mind that underneath every ordinance set forth in the Word, whether it be concerning baptism as a symbol of our becoming dead with Christ, or in the keeping of this feast of remembrance, there are fundamental principles of the greatest possible importance. These principles, or conditions, determine the degree of blessing and profit any participant therein shall receive. The most careful conformity to these conditions, therefore, will bring the heart into a close and precious sense of relationship with the Lord, whereas any neglect or carelessness, lukewarmness, or any unforgiven sin, will be sure to bring condemnation. It is this very vital fact that Paul wants all to keep in mind, and so he points out the dangers, and the consequences of eating and drinking unworthily, improperly, "For he eats condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Cor. 11:29.) As *in* the typical feast there was a strict rule demanding the putting away of all forms of leaven from the abode of the participant, so we must be exercised with the same zeal to obey the divine law of heart purity, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." - 1 Cor. 5:7, 8.

There are many ways in which one may count the *blood* of Christ our Passover common, or treat it with disrespect. According to the above warning of Paul, *any* unworthy conduct on our part would be counted as making us guilty of doing despite to that sacrificial blood. In the case of the Jewish *Law* the blood was to be sprinkled *on* the door overhead *and* on both its sides, but never was the base *or* step *to* be thus sprinkled, Even the typical blood must not be trampled underfoot of man, how much *more* reprehensible then it would be to put the blood of God's *Lamb* under our feet' in any manner whatsoever. May God give us the deepest spiritual discernment in this matter, lest we sin in so serious a thing. Like all of God's arrangements for our approach to him, this, the greatest of all provisions, must beheld in a true reverence; and above all other things required is that of heart purity and a humbled spirit.

And there must also be uppermost in our thought a very real sense of gratitude as we keep fresh in mind the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. The full import of the words of Jesus must be pondered: "This do in *remembrance of me.*" And so it must be when we hearken to the words of the Apostle as he relays the words of Jesus to us, "Ye do show the Lord's death till become." This sense of overwhelming gratitude will make possible the attitude of heart in which to properly survey the sacrifice Jesus asks us to remember.

And where may we better examine ourselves to discover these attitudes, than back again in that faraway upper room? The eleven men assembled there are truly representative of the rest of us, and therefore from them, in their dull-mindedness, illustrating what is often our own, we may, by carefully observing the tenderness of Jesus in seeking to correct their far too limited vision, learn greatly needed lessons.

Joy and sorrow are strangely blended in that same upper room. Compassionate love speaks there by 'both word and action, in rebuke and pity. Along with his words of happiness over the occasion, Jesus must also speak of things sad and regrettable. Side by side with the sublimest of

opportunities ever afforded any of his own, there are things present which are like a dark blot on a what might have been a spotless page of their loyal devotion. And over it all, our minds should prayerfully ponder. It is possible for us to find these things of a regrettable character, a true, picture of our own fickleness, or a much too - real illustration of our own self-seeking and lovelessness. If into that most hallowed room the dark stain of human weakness came; if in the sacred seclusion of that upper room where all that was unworthy and unclean should have been shut out, or shamed into silence, we hear contending voices, not over an eagerness to be the one to wash the Savior's feet, but in clamor over who ought to be considered greatest among them; if in that place apart and alone with Jesus is found the sinister spirit of betrayal in which, with a shamelessness beyond, understanding, a traitor heart asks in unison with the others, "Lord, is it I?" -where, then, are we safe from the baneful presence of inbred sin? Where is there a place so far removed from Satan's influence that nothing defiling can come? -- yes, where indeed, if from this spot selected by Jesus, himself, for so sublime a farewell feast with his own, the inherent weaknesses of our flesh or the malignant forces of evil were not shut out!

May God grant to us the undimmed spiritual perception so needed, and by which alone we may hope to be kept from the baneful results of a deceitful heart. May we have been so taught of God, and so have received of the love of Jesus that he can now say of us as he said of his *faithful ones* in that room, "He that is washed . . . is clean every whit: and *ye are clean.*" And yet a *greater* cleansing came to these disciples, and so it can come to us. We can know that if those men could return to that upper room in after days, not with contention over any supposed right to highest place, nor with a pre-occupation with self, sufficient to blind them to golden opportunities, there would be indeed the marked evidence of the salutary effects of the loving tenderness of Jesus. Assuredly there would be humble confessions made by all. Each would feel that his own deflection had been the most reprehensible and inexcusable, and all would regret that in an hour of such solemnity they had been so slow to grasp the glorious opportunities of that quickly passing hour. Upon every heart there would have been stamped an indelible reminder of how a perverted vision must inevitably weave into the web and woof of life's record those sad mistakes over which many a tear will fall when grace has refined and mellowed the heart. Such mistakes, though graciously forgiven, must still linger on in memory like shadows across our heavenward path.

We are remembering, then, that Jesus has asked us to make this feast a *special remembrance act*. Manifestly the story of that first Supper is not told us with several repetitions just to make known the sad mistakes of the disciples, but rather to forewarn us of imminent dangers surrounding ourselves, and also to strengthen our hearts when our weaknesses are all too painfully revealed. How we too have need of the same words of comfort spoken to our prototype, Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." We have not acted better than they. Perhaps we shall yet see when all things are fully revealed to us, that ours has been the most perfidious conduct, and the least inexcusable short-sightedness. We should not forget that these men made *their* mistakes of the upper room when "the spirit was not yet given." Subsequent to the anointing of the spirit there are no repetitions by them of these same mistakes, are there? Are we not too often prone to make comparisons between ourselves and them as we think of them -before Pentecost, and then compliment ourselves on being so much better than they? But if making comparisons at all, let it be as between them *prior* to the coming of the spirit on them, and since its coming on us. Their mistakes were *before* the Spirit was given, while ours have been *after* receiving it. Thus viewed, how manifestly we need the lessons of that upper room.

Let us then recall these vitally important words found in John's record: "Jesus knowing that he came from God, and went to God, he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin,, and began to wash the

disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." He girded himself to do this menial service for men so concerned over claims for highest place in his Kingdom. Let us not forget here that we are in our meditations now as one among them. We are thus not only seeing their neglects, their need of instruction, and their need of a richer measure of his love, but we are being most mercifully and necessarily humbled also. What, think you, was their first startling recollection, and the first sudden awakening of their consciences? Surely there was a deep inward sense of conviction, a deep sense of shame over their unbecoming conduct, and a rapidly growing wish that they had been more utterly unmindful of self, and more alert to grasp the opportunity to wash the Master's own feet. They had called him Lord and Master, but lips and heart had been out of tune. Peter's reactions to having Jesus wash his feet reveals much of this inward sense of his soul's awakening. This would have been our own inner feeling then, we know, and, alas, even yet it might be often our confessed sense of shame and regret.

Alas indeed! such precious privileges still often come to us on fleeting wings, and ere our dull preoccupied minds are awakened to the heaven-sent opportunity to serve our Master in humility, the golden opportunity passes out of reach, perhaps never to return. Disguised angels come close to us, bringing priceless moments into our daily round of duties, but our eyes are dimmed with earth-born mists, or our hearts have not been sufficiently purified by the cleansing blood to perceive that God comes thus near, and so our *backward* lock reveals, when too late, how greatly we too have failed.

Here those words, "Inasmuch as *ye did it not*," have a particularly solemn warning for us. Oh, ye who are even yet contending for the right to recognition above others of God's children, ye who lay claim to greatest faithfulness among his people, will you not pause in your disputing for a moment and gaze on this upper-room scene, while from the lips of him who came from God and is soon to return to God are heard these momentous words, "*This do in remembrance of me*"? Be not concerned over who shall be greatest, but be alert to perceive that he who *would be* greatest, must be *now* in heart and spirit servant of all.

Precious to Jesus are all those the Father hath given him; albeit, there are still impetuous characters rushing in where angels would fear to tread, self-centered hearts still tainted with inherent selfishness, hasty sons of thunder too ready to destroy rather than save, and a sad overlooking of greater things because the vision has not risen above the minor concerns. Who among us will not confess within our own ashamed hearts that such we have frequently been. Then, oh, the blessedness of our "remembrance" of Jesus by which we are assured of *his abiding love* for us, notwithstanding all our failures.

Then, with these upper-room lessons forever fixed in heart and mind, we follow him to the Garden of Gethsemane. He knows how much we want, above all other things, to be as near as possible to him in this, another secluded and sacred spot; and we can believe that he fully reciprocates our pure desire for this most intimate association with him -- he always does, and so we enter with him. In mind we are of the-privileged three who went furthest with him on that occasion. And, however much we may feel at this distance that we would have done better than they, the evidence is written over our own records far too repeatedly to give us any right to sit in judgment on them. Their story is ours too. Not once, but, alas, many times, we have been found sleeping amid circumstances when every faculty of our spiritual being should have been in lively animation. Times there have been when an overconfidence in our own fidelity has led us into boastful self-praise, or into an assumption of superior attitudes. Certainly we knew of trials to come by which many would prove deficient in qualities we were assured *we* possessed ourselves, and so our spirit was that of certainty that others would fail; but we would never, no never, forsake the Lord, though all others did so. Perhaps, because of some special and much to be

appreciated knowledge imparted to us relative to a wider vision of God's completed redemptive purpose, we have become imbued with a spirit of uncharitableness by which the highest seat at even this sacred remembrance feast was unblushingly claimed as *our* special right. Pitiful revelation! Instead of revealing that such unmerited grace had humbled us into vying with each other for the "chief of sinners" rating, it has revealed how easily we can fall into spiritual pride. How regrettable it is that such lack of humble gratitude on our part should attempt to shut away from *this table* such a multitude of those redeemed by the same precious blood. The atmosphere of this feasting upper room is pervaded with the blessed assurance that "at the Cross there's room" for everyone. The word, therefore, that rings through all our Savior's doings there, and in the Garden, and on the Cross is the same, "keep *me* in remembrance" and ever follow me.

Now in the little while that yet remains we will "keep the feast." We will continue to bless God for "the blood of the covenant wherewith we are sanctified," and by his help keep under that all sufficient cleansing blood. Ere long the number of God's elect will be complete. In a little time perhaps shorter than we think -- we will have proved our devotion to Christ up to the measure he seeks in all his own. Then the toils of the way will be over, the waiting ended, our suffering for his sake finished. Till then, this "remembrance" of him will be treasured and sealed up in our inner heart "*till he come.*" Home is near and each day draws nearer. Therefore in a joy unspeakable and full of glory we wait for "his glorious appearing," and our abundant entrance into his presence, where we shall see his face, and oh!

"Then of Thy grace I'll know the sum,
And in Thy likeness be,
When Thou hast in Thy Kingdom come
And dost remember me."

- *J. J. Blackburn.*

Easter Meditations

"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." - Matthew 28:6

WITH the death of our Lord the hopes of his disciples perished. Filled with sorrow they failed to recall his words foretelling his resurrection. They were not comforted: they saw only the cross and their dead Lord! The future seemed dark, and their hopes now were at their lowest ebb. Sorrowfully, they went away. But, behold! At the appointed time, on the third day, a little group of women approached the tomb where their beloved Lord had been laid. "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." Some of us can imagine their thoughts. To them it was but a little thing that they should visit his resting place, and perhaps recall precious memories. "And, behold, there was a great earthquake." "The keepers did shake and became as dead men." The angel of the Lord appeared, and the stone was rolled away! "Fear not ye:... He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." Surely his words came to the minds of those dear witnesses: "I am the resurrection and the life." The love, the power, the grace, and the purpose of the Eternal God is revealed in this -- the resurrection of Jesus Christ -- the greatest thing, the most potential act of all time. "He is not here: for he is risen"! So speaks the angel to the women. Words fail to describe their joy as they ran to tell the glad news "to the disciples."

"Christ is risen." That is their message. "He lives." And because he lives, we too shall live. Soon those disciples, with hearts charged now with fears and doubts, were to know the power of the risen Christ, and, in his name and strength, were to be used to the glory of the Father and Son, as, with the spirit of Pentecost, they were to go forth with the message of saving grace -- all made possible through and by a crucified and risen Savior.

How grand the message that comes to our ears: "He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification"! Shortly after his resurrection, he manifested himself to his disciples. By this, they were reassured, and just before he left them for the last time, he gave to them his final instructions, as he enlarged their understanding about the things relative to himself (Luke 24:44-49). Amongst his last words, the "Go quickly and tell," and, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," are especially important to the believer.

As we read the account of his death and resurrection, our thought is one of an increasing sense of reverence and appreciation as the unfolding of that supreme and unparalleled sacrifice comes to mind. As yet, we see not the grandeur or the magnitude of the love and grace, the wisdom and mercy, involved therein.

To some have been given the "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" -- the highest possible reward, promised to those who are to be "joint-heirs with Christ" (2 Pet. 1:2-4, Rom. 8:16-18), who is held up before us as a means to a larger, a fuller, and a more sanctified life. Such a life is the life which must be our goal: to follow the Master, as Peter says: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Only thus can we feel that our sanctification is progressive and producing results.

Whatever we may think of sanctification, the Apostles were united in their exhortations to that end. Let us not be deceived by the Adversary as to the limit of attainment -- either to hope for perfection of the flesh, or to despair of full submission of the will. Let us be honest with

ourselves, and live in that eighth chapter of Romans, not forgetting Jesus' words, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

Only as we look to Christ as our example -- in his life, and in his death -- can we know the depth and potency of Paul's words, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God." Let us not be afraid of heeding the words, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." How shall we do this? The answer is found in Hebrews 12:1-3 and onward: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." "Consider him."

Hence, Easter holds for us much that can be to our gain. The risen Christ assures all who accept him as their Savior, of everlasting life. He declares, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Easter is the positive pledge that the risen and glorified Christ "shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." All who fall asleep in him shall arise endowed with bodies perfect and glorious to be forever with their exalted Redeemer and King. There we shall have left behind the flesh and all that is as yet a means of testing. "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 him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Just before his death, Jesus said to his disciples: "I go to prepare a place for you." He also said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." In other words, at his second coming, the faithful should be with him in his glory. Everywhere we see the evidences of the near approach of his Kingdom, according to the words of Jesus, the Prophets, and his Apostles. And so, we are "not in darkness" regarding these things. We see the destruction of the present order in process, and the setting up of "the Kingdom" (Dan. 2:44). This is the world's only hope, although it be not, as yet, seen. To the believer, however, this is no fanciful hope, but is based on the sure word of him who has said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

To those who are to share with Christ in the better resurrection, the time is short. An Easter Day is fast approaching, when the last saint shall be changed and, with the risen Christ, share with him in the glory which is to follow. Then "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10). Great and glorious things are promised to a world, which, as yet, has but little appreciation or regard for the Christ of the Cross, and the Christ of the open tomb. To us, the words of Jesus are spoken, "Lift up your heads." Today "gross darkness covers the earth" But soon the "Sun of Righteousness" is to "arise with healing in his wings the deaf are to hear, and the blind are to see. The spirit of the Lord is to be "poured out upon all flesh"; "when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." - Malachi 4:2; Isaiah 35:5; Joel 2:28; Isaiah 26:9, 40:4, 5.

What a prospect! We cannot with our finite minds envision a world in which there is no sin, no pain, no sorrow, no tears, no partings, no misunderstandings, no envy or strife, and no death. But we can, through the eye of faith, see a world in which the promises of a promise-keeping God

have been fully accomplished. Yes, the earth shall yet resound with the praise of its people, as soon as the glory and beauty of Easter in its full grandeur is revealed in the presence of the Christ. "The people shall praise thee for ever and ever" (Ps. 45:17). Then that of which we read in Revelation 21:1-7 shall have come to pass, and Christ shall be all in all: "King of kings and Lord of lords." Then it shall be that he, "For whom, and by whom, are all things" "shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

We cannot close our thoughts on our Lord, his life, his death, and his resurrection, without some reference to those who, by grace, are privileged to "follow in his steps," and whose hopes are fixed upon the risen Christ. With Paul we too can say that, as yet, we have "not attained." nor are we "perfect." But with him we too can say that "this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to the things which are before," we "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:10-14). No two paths are alike. The way is not always clear. But, beloved, the mighty promise, "I will be with thee," is all-sufficient. It has brought comfort, renewed hope, and courage to a great number. Many of these are now at rest, but their faith, their lives, and their vision may be -- nay, it must be -- ours too. To the world at large the outlook is far from satisfying. But to the believer it is fraught with the joys and peace which were bought at such a tremendous price on Calvary's hill. Truly, "the world is waiting for the sunrise."

A final word -- let Peter speak it: "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Paul's words come to mind too: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. . . . Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

If that first Easter means anything to us-to you and to me-it means that the power of his resurrection is a living power, a power which by the grace of God shall fit us for "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." - 1 Peter 1:2-9.

Our daily prayer is still "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven" We thank our God that, in love, his Son "was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." Let us pray that in reverence and contrition of heart we may, through his sufferings, see our own part in causing them, and as we do so, resolve to follow him "all the way." Only thus can we know that he abides in us, and we in him. With such an assurance, we can look beyond the short span which yet remains, and joyfully envision the time when, with those who have gone before, and those who wait with patient hope the homeward call, we shall share in singing the glorious chorus which will resound in heaven and in earth, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). Surely, it shall be said then that "death is swallowed up in victory." Yes, Calvary's work at last shall have its full reward. In that "day" He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." - Isaiah 25:1-9.

- *W. Wainwright*

Ten Visions of Christ Triumphant

Albert O. Hudson, editor of the *Bible Study Monthly*, has written a series of articles on the above subject which we believe will be appreciated by our readers. - Editorial Committee.

1 - Visions & 2 - The Ascension

THE ten visions of Christ triumphant are contained within the scope of that mystic allegory penned by John the Apostle under inspiration of the Holy Spirit and entitled the "*Apokalupsis*" -- the unveiling or the Revelation. The Book as a whole depicts the conflict between good and evil, between the powers of Heaven and the powers of this world, between Christ the Lord and Satan the Adversary, commencing from the time of our Lord's First Advent and culminating at the end of the Millennial Age when evil has been forever banished and "all that bath breath shall praise the Lord." Within this whole assemblage of vivid pictures and highly coloured scenes there shine out like jewels these ten tableaux, each delineating the characteristics of one or another aspect of our Lord's office and work during this period. Five of the pictures relate to the results of his First Advent and five to those of his Second. Between them all they afford an absorbing presentation of what happened, is happening, and will happen in the unseen world after Christ had risen from the dead and ascended into the presence of the Father, throughout this present Age, and until his promised return is fully accomplished and He is the acknowledged King and Shepherd of our terrestrial creation for the purpose of reconciling all, of all generations, who can be reconciled, to the Father, that God may be all in all.

The writer to the Hebrews was inspired to a rare level of insight when he penned the immortal words "*We see Jesus*" (Heb. 2:9). He was not talking of the physical. The disciples before him had seen Jesus physically for three-and-a half years, and standing on Olivet they saw him still, ascending visibly before their eyes until the cloud received him out of their sight and they saw him no more.

They never set eyes upon him again; yet they continued to see him to the end of their days. We who live now, who have never seen him in the flesh, see him by the eye of the mind, and we see him, not so much in manlike form as was his appearance in the towns and villages of Judea and Galilee, but in the guise of his activities and his work, his ministration, and execution of the Father's purposes, as they are revealed to us in the Scriptures. "*Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more*" (2 Cor. 5:16). And therefore these pictures in the Book of Revelation reveal to us Christ, not as He was, but as He is, and as He will be.

So we come to Vision One, which starts at the beginning and tells of the death and resurrection of Christ. But not as those momentous events were seen by man. That aspect had already been recorded by men who were there at the time, set down as sober history in plain, unvarnished words. When we read those narratives we do so against the scenery and background of this material world and we can visualize the scenes very much as they would appear before our own natural eyes were we also witnesses. Here in the Revelation the story is related from the viewpoint of an observer on the other side of the veil, and for that reason has to be described in the guise of symbol and allegory so that we can understand.

"There appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1). A woman, standing resplendent in the full radiance of the sun behind and around her, her feet resting upon the moon, and twelve stars of heaven woven together to form a scintillating crown set upon her head. Here is fulfillment

of prophecy and a clear exposition of Scripture doctrine. The promise to Eve in Eden was that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Here in Revelation 12 we have the opening scene of the enthralling drama, the culmination of which is the achievement of that promise. Here are the Woman, the Seed, and the Serpent.

This twelfth chapter is set at the time of the First Advent. The Woman is Israel; not the hard-hearted, unbelieving apostate generation which was inhabiting Judea and Galilee when Jesus lived on earth, but the ideal Israel of which the prophets had spoken, the faithful "remnant" which God had promised to preserve throughout the generations until Christ should come. That remnant was represented in Jesus' day by all those "that looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38), and it was of this "remnant," the true Israel, that the seed which is Christ (Gal. 3:16), the Messiah, came. So, in Revelation 12, the Woman, the true Israel, in the fulness of time gave birth to the Man-child who is destined, in his Millennial reign, to rule all nations with a "rod of iron" (literally, to shepherd all nations with a shepherding club; the Eastern shepherd carried a *shebet*, an iron club with which to beat a way for the flock through undergrowth and to defend the sheep from the attacks of wild beasts).

But the serpent was waiting. The great red dragon stood before the Woman to devour her child as soon as it was born. The serpent dragon is a symbol of Satan, the arch-enemy of God and man. (It should be noted that in mediaeval English of the time that the A.V. was produced, "serpent" and "dragon" were synonymous words and either in the A.V. has the same meaning.) The idea of the dragon as the embodiment of the prince of evil goes back to very ancient times -- even to the story of the Garden of Eden. The pagan temple of Marduk in Babylon was guarded by eight gigantic *sirussu*, dragons made of burnished copper (the ruddy colour of which gives rise to the "red" dragon here). The power of Satan at the time of our Lord's birth was manifested through the force of paganism, for Rome ruled the world and Rome was wedded to paganism, the worship of false gods. All the enemies of the Manchild were pagan or supporters of pagan Rome-Pilate, the priests, Herod -- they all served Caesar and Caesar was the embodiment and representative of paganism. It was this pagan power which accomplished the death of the "Man Christ Jesus."

But the seed was not destroyed!

"The dragon stood before the woman ... to devour her child as soon as it was born ... and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (Rev. 12:3-5). How much there is in Scripture to tell us of that great truth! Peter, speaking on the Day of Pentecost, boldly declared *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36). The fundamental requirement of God's redemptive Plan had been satisfied--the seed of the Woman according to Edenic promise, the seed of Abraham according to promise, the scion of the house of David according to promise, the Lion of the tribe of Judah according to promise, all have been fulfilled in the person and in the triumphant resurrection of the Lord, Christ. The dragon had been frustrated and henceforth, though still active, his ultimate destiny was sealed. Christ had ascended to the right hand of God, there to wait, as the writer to the Hebrews says, until the time comes for his enemies to be made his footstool.

From this point the vision of Revelation 12 goes on to speak of other things, of the efforts put forth by the Dragon to retain his power and inflict grievous harm upon those who in after days would become servants of and followers of the Man-child. Not until the end of the Book of Revelation is the Dragon finally disposed of and by that time the whole of the Ten Visions have appeared and given their testimony and run their course.

Vision Two shows something of what happened after the Man-child had been caught up unto the throne of God. It reveals the scene in Heaven itself when the triumphant Redeemer returned to the heavenly sphere after his sojourn on earth. *"It became him"* says the writer to the Hebrews in Hebrews 2:10 *"to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."* That is the basis of the heavenly acclamation which greeted the Lord of glory on his entry into his spiritual home. *"Thou art worthy,"* they sang, *"thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation"* (Rev. 5:9). The whole of Revelation, chapters 4 to 6, enshrines what is known as the Throne scene, in which the Almighty himself is depicted holding high court in Heaven to receive and applaud the victorious Christ returning from earth, having triumphed over death and the grave. And because of this triumph he is pronounced worthy to open the book of the future and break the seven seals which kept closed its pages, that He might become the Executor of the Divine Plan and go forth to set in motion and control those forces which are to influence and direct the events of the ensuing world-age. *"The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David,"* they sang, *"hath prevailed to open the book and loose the seven seals thereof"* (Rev. 5:5). And angels to the number of millions of myriads answered back *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing"* (Rev. 5:12).

So the triumphant Lord took the Book of the Future out of the hand of the Almighty seated upon the Throne, and began to break the seals, one after another. That book was the prophetic record of the Gospel Age, then about to open, an advance written history of events which had not yet taken place.

Herein was depicted all those things -- wars, famines, pestilences; evangelism, martyrdom and finally world judgment-which the Lord had mercifully hidden from the minds of his disciples during that memorable conversation on the Mount of Olives when they had asked him for the signs of his return. *"Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars,"* He had said, *"and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes, but the end is not yet"* (Matt. 24:6, 7). Long years afterward when John, sitting on the rocky shore of Patmos, beheld this vision, he may have understood more clearly what those words portended. Here in Revelation 5, at any rate, we have a clear picture of the triumphant Lord taking the book and breaking the seals in succession, revealing the hidden pictures inside, pictures delineating things which must surely come to pass during that long term of years which in the wisdom of God must elapse before the Lord could return to earth to complete the work of world conversion and reconciliation.

Do we see in this vision of the progressively opening book with all its varied scenes a kind of heavenly conference in which all that was destined to come to pass was as it were laid out in detail and discussed, and the time scale determined, that the Lord might know exactly what was to intervene before He must leave the celestial realm for the second time to come to earth. Jesus did plainly tell his disciples just before his death that *"of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"* (Mark 13:32). Was it at this supreme heavenly session that the secret was imparted to our Lord and that with this book in his hand, He knew, at last, both the day and the hour?

The opening of the book was at least a revelation to the bystander, for John, beholding the vision, was also able to see what was in the book and what he saw is recorded in *his* sixth chapter. The events and the order of the events followed very closely, albeit perhaps in greater detail, the outline Jesus gave, his disciples when giving them the signs betokening his Advent, prior to his death. First came the rider on the white horse with crown and bow, the primitive evangelism of the infant church going out in the power of its commission to teach all nations, and its conquest of paganism three centuries later; then the red horse of war, followed by the black horse of famine.

and the ghastly horse of pestilence -- war, famine, pestilence, the three devastating forces of the Age predicted by Jesus. After that the cries of the martyrs, suffering for their faithfulness to the cause of Christ, and finally the great earthquake and, universal confusion of the cataclysmic conclusion to the Age when the rule of man utterly collapses and the way is open for the Son of Man to appear and take the Kingdom. All that, and perhaps more, was shown in the pictures revealed by the opening of the sealed book and perhaps it was from the time of this heavenly session at which such momentous happenings were foreseen that it can be said the history of the Gospel Age actually began.

What does this vision teach us? Does it not make plain that the events of this Gospel Age are under the control of the Son of Man himself? "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The work of the Lord is with the development of his Church during this Age. We know that. The Age is set aside for the calling out and the perfecting of this "people for God's Name" and until that work is finished the Lord's work on behalf of mankind in general cannot commence. We know that also, and since all this is in the hands of the Son, and He is our High Priest and our Shepherd, it would seem from this chapter that He has control over the course of the Age and the events of the Age and all that has to do with the Age, that He might bend all things in this Age and in this world to serve the one great purpose of this Age-the development and perfecting of the Church. That seems to be the spiritual meaning behind this vision of the sealed book. The Lord controls the sending out of the white horse of evangelism, the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the ghastly horse of pestilence. He watches over the souls of the martyrs and holds them safely in the sleep of death until the time for their resurrection, and He so overrules earth's political and social affairs that the time of judgment that is to conclude the Age comes to its climax neither too soon nor too late, but just at the time foreordained by God. No wonder the angels sang "Worthy is the Lamb ... to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" - Rev. 5:12.

This then is the scene in heaven, enduring through the Gospel Age as the Lamb breaks one seal after another, revealing to angels and men alike what is to come next. To the extent that these mystic happenings can be related to mankind's ideas of time all this has to be placed during the ten days intervening between the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, for at that latter time the next vision in sequence takes the stage, the office of our Lord as High Priest, Counselor, Shepherd, Guide and Helper to the Church from beyond the veil. The third vision, that of our Lord among the lampstands, recorded in Revelation, chapters 1 to 3, and picturing his Age-enduring care for his Church, pictures this.

(To be continued.)

Immanuel

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." - Isaiah 9:6.

CHRISTIANS of all shades of religious belief are united in their conviction that our text, with its related passage in Isaiah 7:14, is a prophecy which found its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus of the Holy Spirit by the Virgin Mary nearly 2000 years ago. We share their conviction supported, as it is, by the inspired testimony of one of the Apostles - Matthew 1:22-23.

However, in this article, we do not plan to write about the fulfillment of the prophecy. Instead we propose to consider some of the lessons to be learned from the prophecy itself and from the Child whose name embodied Isaiah's great message to King Ahaz and the nation of Judah over which he reigned.

It was not only a predictive statement; it was a message of grave importance too, and should have been seriously pondered by the then King Ahaz of the lineage of David, to whom it was directed. The whole section of Isaiah from chapter seven, verse one, to chapter nine, verse seven, should be read as one inter-related prophecy, as we will show. That the message was at first delivered orally is clear, for we read that Isaiah was told to "go out to meet Ahaz ... at the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the highway of the fuller's field; and thou shalt say to him, Take heed and be quiet; fear not, and let not thy heart faint ... " This was communicated to Ahaz, accordingly; but that it was afterward committed to writing is evident.

The fortunes of Judah were at a low point in their history. On the throne, the throne of David, sat Ahaz, a weakling given to superstition and idolatry. It is written of him that "He made molten images for Baals; and he burned incense in the valley of Hinnom, and burned his sons in the fire. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (2 Chron. 28:2-4; 2 Kings 16:3, 4).

Judah had been humiliated by an incursion of the Syrians under Rezin, their king; and was also attacked by Pekah, king of the northern ten tribes of Israel, "who smote him with a great slaughter," and was only delivered from this by the appeal of the prophet Oded, who made intercession for Judah (see 2 Chron. 28:1-16). The Edomites, who had for a long time been a subject people, also smote Judah, and carried away captives. And the Philistines invaded and took away cities, "For Jehovah humbled Judah because of Ahaz, because he made Judah lawless and transgressed much against Jehovah" (Darby's translation). Did this turn Ahaz from his selfwilled ways? "He took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria [for his help]: but he helped not. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz" (2 Chron. 28:21, 22). He reasoned that if the god of the Syrians helped the Syrians, then he would sacrifice to their god -- which he did. He stopped the temple worship, and made altars in every corner of Jerusalem. - 2 Chron. 28:21-25.

It was at the time when this faithless, idolatrous king was faced with the impending assault from the combined forces of Israel and Syria, a threat that caused the heart of Ahaz, and the heart of his people to shake, that Isaiah was sent to Ahaz with his first message. It was the avowed purpose of the invading parties to dethrone Ahaz, and put a man of their own choosing, "the son of Tabeal," on the throne of Judah. The Lord's word was: "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within three score and

five years shall Ephraim [the northern kingdom] be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son." - Isaiah 7:5-9.

What was in this that should have been an encouragement to Ahaz? This: Jehovah had made a covenant with David, a covenant confirmed with an oath, that his seed should sit on his throne forever. "I will set up thy seed after thee ... and I will establish his kingdom ... thy throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:117; Ps. 89:1-4, 26-37). The whole of the eighty-ninth Psalm is inspired by this covenant promise, and its lack of fulfillment; yet it breathes a confidence that the covenant will be fulfilled, even though many sons should receive needed chastisements. The promise was sure, even though one must come who either would not see death, or would be delivered from the grave (see Ps. 89:48). So, in view of the covenant promise to David, the message to Ahaz, a son of David's line, was this: Who are these, Rezin and Pekah? Are they and their capitol cities the subject of prophecy-respecting covenant promises? Who are they that they should thwart Jehovah's counsels? The assurance to Ahaz was that the intent of these conspirators will not stand. But, inasmuch as the covenant promise depended on obedient faith, the finality of the first message to Ahaz was, "If ye believe not, surely ye shall not be established." - Isaiah 7:1-9.

After this Isaiah was told to tell Ahaz to ask for a sign; and no limit was placed on what he might ask. "Ask it in the depth, or in the height above." He could even ask for what, to him, would be the impossible. But this unbeliever, this idolatrous son of David's line, scorned to even try to test Jehovah; for he had discarded faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He seems to have attributed his own and Judah's discomfiture, not to his own and the people's departure from the covenant by which they had tenure of the land (see Deut. 28-29:1), but to the superiority of the Syrian's god, who acted so effectively on the Syrian's behalf. Thus his reply to Isaiah was, "I will not try Jehovah." Note that Isaiah, in giving the following prophecy, does not address him as Ahaz, but as "house of David." "Hear ye now, O house of David; *Is it* a small thing for ye to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This whole passage from Isaiah (Isa. 7:1-9:7) hinges on the coupling of the name Immanuel with the Davidic covenant. As the words were not directed to Ahaz as an individual, but to the "house of David" of which he was the then present representative, it thus becomes a continuing promise to the kingly line until that time when the heir, the true Son of David, should appear. This is the significance of the name Immanuel," which, being interpreted, is God with us"; that is, with us, the house of David, according to the covenant promise. - Matt. 1:23.

That the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14-16 must have an apparent and hidden application is evident, for the birth of Jesus to the virgin Mary, over 700 years later, could be no sign to Ahaz; the sign to him must be that which evidenced that Jehovah was the true God, the living God, ruling in the affairs of nations, and particularly the Sovereign over "the house of David." A time limit was set in verse 16, "For before the child knoweth to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose kings thou fearest shall be forsaken." This, added to the previous prophecy, verse eight of the seventh chapter, that within 65 years "shall Ephraim be broken so as to be no more a people," was the immediate assurance to the "house of David." As far as Ahaz was concerned, it was of no avail.

But a worse punishment was in store because of their unbelief and refusal to trust in Jehovah. In order to be relieved of the impending threat of the combined kings of Israel and Syria, Ahaz and his counselors were considering a league with Assyria to get Assyria to march against Damascus; the idea being that by Assyria so doing the king of Syria would be compelled to cease from harassing Judah, and return to his own land to defend Damascus. As an inducement to Assyria,

Ahaz "stripped the house of the LORD, and the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave to the king of Assyria: but he was no help to him" (2 Chron. 28:21). Isaiah's warning against this act of desperation is rather pictorial: "In the same day shall the LORD shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard (Isa. 7:20). The warning was that once Assyria had started on a march of aggression, they would not only conquer Syria, but also, "the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away." Because Israel "refuses the waters of Shiloh [meaning they had departed from the rule of the house of David] . . . , and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son," therefore, the LORD will use the Assyrians to bring about his long withheld judgment on the northern kingdom. Not only that, but furthermore, "He shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel" (Isa. 8:6-8), that is, even though "God is with us." Yet the Lord would not suffer the house of David and, consequently Jerusalem, to fall into the hands of the conspirators. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken to pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us" (Isa. 8:9, 10). And as to the intent of Ahaz to seek Assyria's aid, Isaiah's plea was, "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people (Ahaz' counselors) shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid." - Isaiah 8:12.

It is not probable that Ahaz planned to actually federate with Assyria; but his counselors urged him to conspire with Assyria to bring pressure to bear against Damascus in order to relieve that which threatened Jerusalem. It seems clear that Isaiah is warning Ahaz to keep clear of Assyria: not to depend on help from this Gentile power; for his plea is "Sanctify Jehovah of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isa. 8:13). The house of Israel and the house of Judah were both guilty of forsaking their covenant God; therefore he would be for "a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both ... " (Here we pass by the application by Peter, in 1 Pet. 2:8, as we are concerned with the immediate significance of this statement to "the house of David."

Having forsaken the true God, and looking to necromancers and soothsayers for counsel, what could they expect, says Isaiah, but "trouble and darkness, gloom and anguish, and thick darkness" (Isa. 8:19-22). As a Christian poet has expressed it, "Blind unbelief is sure to err." And so it proved to be in Ahaz' case. It came to pass even as Isaiah warned. The forces of Assyria, set in motion by Ahaz as a help to his maintaining his throne, eventually invaded not only Syria but Israel and Judah as well.

How graphically does Isaiah depict the final outcome of the future invasion! "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning fuel of fire" (Isa. 9:4, 5). The warfare of that period was mostly hand-to-hand conflict, with shock troops of chariots and horses. We may well imagine the din and tumult of such a battle: the shrieks and cries of the foot soldiers trampled by the horses, as well as from deadly wounds inflicted by lancers and swordsmen; the snort of the horses, and the clashing of the chariots as the charioteers sought to unwheel and destroy each other! Then, after the conflict, there would be the clearing of the battlefield and the burning of the debris. But, says Isaiah, this battle would not terminate like that, for Jehovah would fight for Jerusalem "as in the day of Midian." That is, He would interpose directly, as he did when Israel was delivered from the Midianite oppression by Gideon, and his three hundred (Judges 7). The battle would not be between Assyria and Judah. No, indeed! It would be between Jehovah and Assyria. There would be no din, no confusion; no noise of battle. Only the necessity of clearing the field after the defeat of the enemy. And so Isaiah records (Isa. 37:36, 37): "Then the angel of the LORD went forth,

and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and four-score and five thousand; ... So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned."

From Isaiah (Isa. 36:16, 17) it is evident that it was the intention of the king of Syria to do with Judah as he was doing with the peoples of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel; that is, transporting them to other subject cities and provinces, and filling their own cities with peoples of other captive nations. This could not be, says the prophet, and note the reason: "For unto us a child is born, unto us [the house of David] a son is given [prophetically, by covenant promise]: and the government shall be upon his shoulder ... and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it; and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever" (Isa. 9:6, 7). How can this be? "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

True, Jehovah Himself did eventually remove Zedekiah of the house of David; but that was God's own doing, not Rezin's, not Pekah's, not Sennacherib's. As the oath to Abraham was intended as "a strong consolation to us who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18), even so the Davidic covenant and the assurance given by the Lord through Isaiah, was intended as a strong consolation to Ahaz, to Judah, and to Jerusalem, that there was no need to fear the counsels of those who were conspiring to remove the Davidic line from the throne of Judah at Jerusalem. These, although permitted to harass the king who sat on David's throne, could not accomplish their purpose to replace him with another. And why not? "For unto us a child is born [by covenant promise], unto us the son [of David's line] is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder." God's oath to David sealed this.

No! The promise of Isaiah (Isa. 9:6, 7) is not directly a Christian hope, although we glory in it. It is Israel's, and after that the Gentiles; for the "glad tidings of great joy" proclaimed by the angel to the shepherds, was to be "to all people" (Luke 2:10). But it is of interest to the called of this age, in this sense, that we are to be joint-heirs with Christ in his kingdom.

"Christ as a son [of David, Son of God] over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). It only awaits the completion of "his house" for the blindness to be turned from Israel, and the blessings so long foretold to begin to flow to them and eventually to all people. For, after taking out from among the Gentiles "a people for his name," then will "the tabernacle" (the temporary house of David which is fallen) be superseded by the house which will be set up on its ruins. So it is written: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33). "I shall give thee the heathen [the Gentiles] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." - Psalm 2:8.

- F. A. Essler

The Trial of Faith

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." - 1 Peter 1:9.

Peter in his first epistle (1 Peter 1:1-7) writes to the saints in districts to the north of Palestine, in substance giving praise to God for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which had revived their hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for all who were being kept by the power of God through faith, unto or for the salvation that would be revealed in the last time. This, says Peter, should make you exceeding glad; although for a time, you will be distressed by trials and temptations, permitted of God to test the genuineness and endurance of your faith that, when proven, may redound to praise, honor, and glory -- not now, but -- when you appear before Christ for his appraisal of your works.

The crucial point of what Peter is saying relates to the trial of faith. But why should faith be tried, what is accomplished thereby? We must recognize that it is only by the exercise of faith, that we can come into vital relationship with God; for he cannot be apprehended by our physical senses - only by faith. Faith of itself must constitute the reality of things that pertain to God, and to his promise of salvation through Christ. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance [reality] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And in Romans 10:17, Paul on the basis of what he has just been revealing says: "So then faith cometh by hearing [heeding], and hearing by the word of God."

Two of the ways by which the endurance of faith may be tested are by long-delayed answers to prayers and by experiences that seem diametrically opposed to our spiritual interests and service. Paul was tested in both of these ways. First by a physical ailment which he called "A thorn in the flesh." The account given us in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (R.S.V.) says: "To keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness: ' Perhaps it was his eyes; but whatever it was, it was a constant trial. The second experience was his trip to Rome, initiated by his letter from Achaia, recorded in Romans 15:22-33 in which he asks the brethren at Rome to strive with him in prayer for three things: first, that he be delivered from unbelieving Jews; second, that the gift of money which had been donated by the saints at Macedonia and Achaia might be accepted by the needy brethren at Jerusalem, and third, that he might get to Rome with joy by the will of God. The second, of which he was fearful, was fulfilled on arrival at Jerusalem, for the brethren accepted the gift gratefully. But the way in which the first and third requests were fulfilled was a very severe test to his faith and patience, by which he must have experienced a growth in character.

James 1:3, 4 says: "The trial of your faith worketh patience," that is, it calls for the exercise of patience. If we do not experience this, then we miss a means of demonstrating willingness to exercise cheerful endurance. Therefore we should not think it strange that we have trials, for trials give opportunity for our perfecting by the spirit with which we are imbued, whereby we are made perfect and entire, wanting in nothing. It is because of this prospect that James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Trials are not joyful to the flesh; but a mind and heart imbued with God's spirit can rejoice. There are those who think it utter folly to be submissive to ills and injustice, but both God and Christ are examples in long-suffering and patience under trial, and so we know we do not go astray in being submissive under what God permits to afflict us (1 Pet. 3:20; Heb. 2:10; 5:7-9).

Paul (Rom. 5:3-5) teaches a like result from trials to that given by James, and says: "We know 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." "Therefore," says Paul, "we glory in tribulation." Not because tribulation itself is desirable, but because it calls forth from within graces of character that need to be exercised in order to develop properly. Manifestly any power or function needs to be exercised to increase, for graces that are not used will fail to develop. It is then just as Paul says: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts -- not by temptation or tribulation -but by the holy spirit which is given us." The prayer of David should be the earnest entreaty of our lips: "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" (Ps. 139: 23, 24).

We are all aware that there have been divisions among those more or less enlightened through the Truth Movement; an enlightenment that has exercised much influence upon religious thought in the past ninety-odd years. We have no reason to think that anyone of these groups has been aught but sincere: and if this be true, then sincerity is not a criterion of truth. Sincerity is essential to God's approval of us, but is not a proof of truth. In seeking guidance, it is very comforting to have the assurance that "The Lord knoweth his own sheep, and that they knowing his voice (knowing the foundation truths of the Word) will not follow another." It is also good to know that the very elect have the protection of the Lord, and will not be led away by subversive deceptions.

But does this mean that the very elect will have no errors in their beliefs? This would be wonderful if true; but where is the humble, conscientious saint that can truly make such a claim? If then we cannot claim freedom from error, what does the assurance of not being deceived mean? And what must we do to be safeguarded in this evil day?

Errors of understanding and subversive teachings were manifest in the early church groups almost from the beginning. Regardless of the knowledge the Apostles had, they knew only in part. There were no errors in their teachings or writings, for as promised by Jesus, the holy spirit brought to their minds all that he had said to them, and directed them in their utterances, which were therefore infallible. But translations and interpretations of their writings cannot claim infallibility. Therefore, except for the fundamental teachings which are plainly, definitely and often stated, requiring no interpretation, God has seen fit to permit those running in the race for the prize of the high calling, to reach their own conclusions with respect to many of the lesser issues of the Divine operations cited in the Word of truth.

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Our Lord's last message and prayer on behalf of his disciples reveal great love and deep interest in their welfare. Knowing the very severe trials of faith they would soon have to face, he bids them be of good cheer, for he had overcome the world. Jesus did not overcome with carnal weapons and warriors, although he could have asked of the Father and have received more than twelve legions of angels, which under his command could have changed the course of this world. But to what avail? Man was under the sentence of death by the will of God, and even a righteous government, regardless of how efficient it was, could not have imparted life. Nor would our Lord for one moment have contemplated doing this; for he knew that it was God's will that he suffer and die as a ransom sacrifice, that he might restore the willing and obedient in their judgment time. Nor did he endeavor to influence with oratory or by personal magnetism; that he might have done so was evidenced by the report of the officers that returned to the priests and Pharisees without him, saying, "Never man spake like this man."

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In all probability, many have been hindered from experiencing the special blessing that God has designed for those who approach the portals of entrance to the Most Holy, because of their lack of faith in God's ability and willingness to thus favor one so weak. If we trust in God, there is nothing too hard for him to do on our behalf. God does not call us because we are worthy, but because of what he is able to accomplish in us if we will exercise faith and be obedient in our hearts. Nor should we spend all our time in the Court condition, regardless of how much we appreciate the various features of salvation therein provided for us. God's will for his elect is their sanctification to his will and purpose, by which they enter into the holy of spiritual insight and development, that they may be qualified to become body members of Christ in the Most Holy. So we should not think it strange that we are being fitted through fiery trials, but rejoice inasmuch as we are partaking of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, we also may be glad with exceeding joy.

"Wherefore," says Peter, "let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" . . . "Gird up the loins of your mind [brace or prepare yourself for the warfare of faith], be sober, and *hope to the end* for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:19; 1:13).

- J. T. Read

The Trial of Faith

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."-1 Peter 1:9. ,

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PETER in his first epistle (1:1-7) writes to the saints in districts to the north of Palestine, in substance giving praise to God for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which had revived their hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for all who were being kept by the power of God through faith, unto or for the salvation that would be revealed in the last time. This, says Peter, should make you exceedingly glad; although for a time, you will be distressed by trials and temptations, permitted of God to test the genuineness and endurance of your faith that, when proven, may redound to praise, honor, and glory-not now, but-when you appear before Christ for his appraisal of your works.

The crucial point of what Peter is saying relates to the trial of faith. But why should faith be tried, what is accomplished thereby? We must recognize that it is only by the exercise of faith, that we can come into vital relationship with God; for he cannot be apprehended *by* our physical senses-only by faith. Faith of itself must constitute the reality of things that pertain to God, and to his promise of salvation through Christ. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance [reality] of things hoped for, the

of money which had been donated by the saints at Macedonia and Achaia might be accepted by the needy brethren at Jerusalem; and third, that he might get to Rome with joy by the will of God. The second, of which he was fearful, was fulfilled on arrival at Jerusalem, for the brethren accepted the gift gratefully. But the way in which the first and third requests were fulfilled was a very severe test to his faith and patience, by which he must have experienced a growth in character.

James (1:3, 4) says: "The trial of *your* faith worketh patience," that is, it calls for the exercise of patience. If we do not experience this, then we miss a means of demonstrating willingness to exercise cheerful endurance. Therefore we should not think it strange that we have trials, for trials give opportunity for our perfecting by the spirit with which we are imbued, whereby we are made perfect and entire, wanting in nothing. It is because of this prospect that James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Trials are not joyful to the flesh; but a mind and heart imbued with God's spirit can rejoice. There are those who think it utter folly to be submissive to ills and injustice, but both God and Christ are ex-

evidence of things not seen." And in Romans 10:17, Paul on the basis of what he has just been revealing says: "So then faith cometh by hearing [heeding], and hearing by the word of God."

Two of the ways by which the endurance of faith may be tested are by long-delayed answers to prayers and by experiences that seem diametrically opposed to our spiritual interests and service. Paul was tested in both of these ways. First by a physical ailment which he called "A thorn in the flesh." The account given us in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (R. S. V.) says: "To keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to *me*, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' " Perhaps it was his eyes; but whatever it was, it was a constant trial. The second experience was his trip to Rome, initiated by his letter from Achaia, recorded in Romans 15:22-33 in which he asks the brethren at Rome to strive with him in prayer for three things: first, that he be delivered from unbelieving Jews; second, that the gift

amples in long-suffering and patience under trial, and so we know we do not go astray in being submissive under what God permits to afflict us-1 Peter 3:20, Hebrews 2:10, 5:7-9.

Paul (Rom. 5:3-5) teaches a like result from trials to that given by James, and says: "We know 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." "Therefore," says Paul, "we glory in tribulation." Not because tribulation itself is desirable, but because it calls forth from within graces of character that need to be exercised in order to develop properly. Manifestly, any power or function needs to be exercised to increase, for graces that are not used will fail to develop. It is then just as Paul says: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts-not by temptation or tribulation-but by the holy spirit which is given us." The prayer of David should be the earnest entreaty of our lips: "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"-Psalm 139:23, 24.

We are all aware that there have been divisions among those more or less enlightened through the Truth Movement; an enlightenment that has exercised much influence upon religious thought in the, past ninety-odd years. We have no reason to think that anyone of these groups has been aught but sincere: and if this be true, then sincerity is not a criterion of truth. Sincerity is essential to God's approval of us, but is not a proof of truth. In seeking guidance, it is very comforting to have the assurance that "The Lord knoweth his own sheep, and they, knowing his voice (knowing the foundation truths of the Word), will not follow another." It is also good to know that the very elect have the protection of the Lord, and will not be led away by subversive deceptions.

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elect will have no errors in their beliefs? This would be wonderful if true; but where is the humble, conscientious saint that can truly make such a claim? If then we cannot claim freedom from error, what does the assurance of not being deceived mean? And what must we do to be safeguarded in this evil day?

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Notice of Annual Meeting

All should be aware of the fact that the affairs of our Institute are in the hands of seven brethren who are elected from its membership to serve for a period of one year or until their successors are elected.

Our Annual Meeting this year is scheduled to be held (D.V.) Saturday, June 2, 1979, at 11:00 a.m. in West Suffield, Connecticut, 145 N. Grand Street.

Membership in the Pastoral Bible Institute is, and always has been, open to any consecrated brother or sister who "is in full harmony with the purpose, spirit, and policy of the Institute," and who intends to support it "in all reasonable ways as he or she shall deem to be the Lord's will."

As stated in its charter, the purpose for which the Institute was formed is "the dissemination of Bible truths in various languages by means of the publication of tracts, pamphlets, papers, and other religious documents, and by the use of all other lawful means which its Board of Directors, duly constituted, shall deem expedient for the furtherance of the purposes stated."

The membership fee is five dollars (\$5.00) which should accompany the application. If an applicant lacks the membership fee, but is otherwise acceptable, the fee will be paid out of a special fund provided for that purpose.

In order to participate in the election of directors at the next annual meeting, anyone not already a member, who desires to apply for membership, should do so promptly as, according to our bylaws, "the registration of such membership must be made twenty days prior to the election."

Members of the Pastoral Bible Institute are hereby reminded of the privilege which is theirs of nominating in the pages of this journal the brethren they wish' to elect as directors for the fiscal year 1979-80.

The brethren whose terms of service will expire are: F. A. Essler, A. Gonczewski, H. C. Hoglebe, L. Petran, P. L. Read, W. J. Siekman, and J. B. Webster.

The brethren here named are pleased to report that a spirit of Christian love and harmony exists in their midst; and they have every reason to believe that the Lord has seen fit to bless their association in this ministry. They realize however, that those carrying on any work may fail to see opportunities for improvement and expansion apparent to others not charged with such responsibilities, and that for this reason changes in office sometimes have beneficial effects. They therefore urge upon all members of our Institute that they make this a special occasion for prayer, that our Father's' will may be expressed in the vote of the members. If, after prayerful meditation, any are led of the Lord to nominate brethren, and will forward the names and addresses of such brethren so as to reach this office on or before April 10, 1979, such names will be published in the May June issue of the Herald, that all members may have an opportunity of voting for them.

THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

"For as often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

According to our usual method of reckoning, the Memorial celebration this year should be held after sundown, Tuesday, April 10. This, according to the Jewish calendar, is the 14th of Nisan, and the appropriate time for the brethren to meet "in remembrance" of the Lamb ho was slain.

"This do in remembrance of Me"

Entered Into Rest

Hilda Shaw, Richmond, Va.
Mary O. Siekman, Batavia, Ill.
Helen Slivinsky, Manchester, Conn.
Stanley Strycharz, Holyoke, Mass.
Vera Taut, Chicago, Ill.
Agnes Wood, Scotland
Anna Zarzycki, Naperville, Ill.
Anna Zasteluk, Milwaukee, Wis.