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Christmas

As shadows cast by cloud and sun
Flit o'er the summer grass,
So, in thy sight, Almighty One,
Earth's generations pass.
And as the years, an endless host,
Come swiftly pressing on,
The brightest names that earth can boast
Just glisten and are gone.

Yet doth the star of Bethlehem shed
A luster pure and sweet:
And still it leads, as once it led,
To the Messiah's feet.
O Father, may that holy star
Grow every year more bright,
And send its glorious beams afar
To fill the world with light.

"Let Heaven and Earth Rejoice"

"The Message of the angels to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem becomes more and more precious to each child of God in proportion as he grows in grace and knowledge. As his ears and eyes of understanding open more widely to the lengths and breadths of God's great Plan of the Ages, that prophetic Message is the more highly esteemed as an epitome of the entire Gospel. Nor can our attention be called too frequently to the great event which lies at the foundation of that Message -- the Savior's birth . . .

"The angelic Message was a prophecy of good things to be accomplished for the Church and the world during the Millennial Age. The Church is to have the first blessing. The First Resurrection is to be composed only of the blessed and holy who shall live and reign with Christ during the thousand years. Then Satan shall be bound, and the good influences of truth and righteousness shall enlighten the whole earth. (Rev. 20:1-6.) The declaration of the Scriptures is that the deliverance of the Church will come early in the morning of the Millennial day. As the Prophet declares, 'God will help her early in the morning.' -- Psalm 46:5, margin....

"But much as we rejoice in the glorious hopes of the' Gospel set before us who now see, who now rejoice with joy unspeakable, we are glad that the divine mercy and love are of such lengths and breadths and heights and depths as to encompass the whole world of mankind, and provide a blessing for every member of Adam's race through him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood... .

"Truly, the more we see of the Divine Plan for our salvation, which began to take shape in the birth of Jesus, the more we feel like shouting with the angelic choir praises to the God of heaven, thankfulness for his mercy to the children of men! It mattered not that the babe born in Bethlehem was the Savior only in prospect, that he could not even be anointed to do his work until he reached manhood's estate thirty years later. It mattered not that even then it would be necessary for him to lay down his life gradually during the three and a half years of his earthly ministry, to be finished at Calvary. Nor did it matter that his resurrection was still three days after his death, and his ascension forty days later; and that the blessing in general would be deferred for nearly nineteen centuries thereafter. As the angels could sing and rejoice at the first budding of the Divine Plan of Salvation, so also can all who have faith in the, ultimate outcome rejoice with joy unspeakable and give praise to God in the highest and to his Son our Lord."

The Birthday of a King

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made . known unto us." - Luke 2:15.

WHAT IS this thing which is come to pass? What deep secrets of Divine wisdom, justice, power and love lie here, wrapped up in these poor swaddling clothes? Mary holds in her arms what draws the wondering eyes and inspires the loftiest song of angels. We bend over the infant in the manger, and strange scenes in his after-life rise -upon our memory. Those little tender feet are yet to tread upon the roughened waters of a stormy lake, as men tread the solid earth. At the touch of that 'little feeble hand, the blind eye is to open, and the tied tongue to be unloosed, and diseases of all kinds to flee away. That voice, whose gentle breathings in his infant slumbers can scarce be heard, is to speak to the winds and the waves, and they shall obey it; is to summon the dead from the sepulcher, and they shall come forth; is to implant words of wondrous grace in the hearts of men, and they shall turn from sin and self -to serve the living God. Who, then, and what was he, whose birth the angels celebrated in such high strains? For answer, and for our Christmas season meditation, we shall consider some of the words of the inspired Prophet Isaiah who, anticipating the heavenly host, proclaims with exalted eloquence a Divine Plan which is to culminate in "glory to God in the highest" and "great joy to all people."

Using Rotherham's translation throughout, we commence with Isa. 59:12-20 -

"FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS HAVE MULTIPLIED BEFORE THEE,
AND OUR SINS HAVE WITNESSED AGAINST US,
FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS ARE WITH US,
AND AS FOR OUR INIQUITIES WE ACKNOWLEDGE THEM:
TRANSGRESSING AND DENYING YAHWEH,
AND TURNING AWAY FROM FOLLOWING OUR GOD,
SPEAKING, OPPRESSION AND REVOLT, CONCEIVING AND MUTTERING FROM THE
HEART WORDS OF FALSEHOOD.

SO THEN THERE HATH BEEN A DRIVING BACK OF JUSTICE.
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AFAR OFF STANDETH, --
FOR TRUTH HATH STUMBLLED IN THE BROAD-WAY,
AND RIGHT CANNOT ENTER;
AND THE TRUTH HATH BEEN FOUND MISSING,
AND HE THAT HATH TURNED AWAY FROM WRONG
IS LIABLE TO BE DESPOILED.

AND WHEN YAHWEH LOOKED
THEN WAS IT GRIEVOUS IN HIS EYES THAT
THERE WAS NO JUSTICE:
WHEN HE SAW THAT THERE WAS NO MIGHTY MAN
THEN WAS HE ASTONISHED THAT THERE WAS NONE TO INTERPOSE, --
SO HIS OWN ARM BROUGHT HIM SALVATION,
AND HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS THE SAME UPHELD HIM;

AND HE PUT ON
RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A COAT OF MAIL,

AND A HELMET OF VICTORY UPON HIS HEAD, --
AND HE PUT ON THE GARMENTS OF AVENGING FOR CLOTHING,
AND WRAPPED ABOUT HIM AS A CLOAK -- JEALOUSY!
ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS ACCORDINGLY WILL HE REPAY,
INDIGNATION TO HIS ADVERSARIES,
RECOMPENSE TO HIS ENEMIES,
TO THE COASTLANDS -- RECOMPENSE WILL HE REPAY:
THAT THEY MAY REVERE --
FROM THE WEST THE NAME OF YAHWEH,
AND FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN HIS GLORY.
FOR HE WILL COME IN LIKE A RUSHING STREAM,
THE BREATH OF YAHWEH DRIVING IT ON;
SO SHALL COME IN FOR ZION A REDEEMER,
EVEN FOR SUCH AS ARE TURNING FROM TRANSGRESSION IN JACOB, --
DECLARETH YAHWEH."

Here, in primary reference to the iniquity of the Jewish nation, with words remarkable for beauty and strength, is described the moral condition of the world. The Lord is represented as seeing this state of deep guilt-a state where there was deep conviction of that guilt and a readiness to make confession -and as wondering that there was no intercessor, and as *Himself* interposing to bring deliverance and salvation. It was the earnest wish of the Lord that there should be deliverance, and in order to effect that he himself procured "it. The *characteristics* of the Glorious One who should accomplish these purposes were righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal. He would come to take recompense on his foes and to reward the wicked according to their deeds. The *effect* of this would be that the name of the Lord would be feared from the rising to the setting sun. Of this Deliverer the Prophet further speaks in Isa. 28:16 -

"THEREFORE
THUS SAITH MY LORD YAHWEH,
BEHOLD ME! FOUNDING IN ZION A STONE,
A STONE OF TESTING
THE COSTLY CORNER OF A WELL-LAID FOUNDATION,
HE THAT TRUSTETH SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE!"

So, says the Prophet, shall be laid-and so, add the Apostles (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6) has been laid in the coming of Christ into the world, the enduring foundation on which the whole system of truth and of salvation for mankind is to arise. Whosoever believeth on him shall not "hasten away" or "hasten about" (distractedly). He is the sure foundation, on which whosoever builds will not be confounded; but he is also a stone of stumbling, against which whosoever stumbles will be broken, and which will crush to powder whomsoever it falls upon. "This Child is set for the fall and rise of many." The Prophet continues (Isa. 7:14)

"WHEREFORE LET MY LORD HIMSELF GIVE YOU A SIGN, --
Lo! A VIRGIN, BEING WITH CHILD AND GIVING BIRTH TO A SON,
THOU WILT CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL."

A miraculous conception-the evidence of divine power! For how else could *a virgin* conceive? Two great and fundamental truths concerning the Messiah are here shown forth-his life was not received through Father Adam, and second, the fact of his prehuman existence! "The Logos became flesh." Only one virgin and one child Immanuel are spoken of-namely, the virgin Mary

and the child Jesus. (Matt. 1:22, 23.) "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." (Gal. 4:4.) The Prophet speaks further concerning this child (Isa. 9:6, 7)

"FOR A CHILD HATH BEEN BORN TO US
A SON HATH BEEN GIVEN TO US,
AND THE DOMINION IS UPON HIS SHOULDER, --
AND HIS NAME HATH BEEN CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
FATHER. OF FUTURITY,
PRINCE OF PROSPERITY.
OF THE INCREASE OF DOMINION AND OF PROSPERITY
THERE SHALL BE NO END
UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID AND
UPON HIS KINGDOM,
BY ESTABLISHING IT AND
BY SUSTAINING IT,
WITH JUSTICE AND
WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS, --
FROM HENCEFORTH
EVEN UNTO TIMES AGE-ABIDING:
THE JEALOUSY OF YAHWEH OF HOSTS WILL PERFORM THIS!"

From the context we note how here the message changes with a striking abruptness, from the midnight of sorrow to a daybreak of hope and joy; from the Assyrian and Chaldean desolations to the times of Immanuel, the great hope of Israel, and the heir of David's throne. "A Son hath been givers to us," one worthy to bear these significant names, each indicative of the effect of his glorious reign -- a reign destined to endure so long, evermore fraught with blessings to the filling of earth's cup. What can be more magnificent; what can more completely fill out the answer to the divinely prescribed prayer, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? And now does the Prophet speak further of the personal character and qualities of the promised Prince (Isa. 11:1-5)

"THERE SHALL COME FORTH A SHOOT FROM THE STOCK OF JESSE, --
AND A SPROUT FROM HIS ROOTS SHALL BEAR FRUIT;
AND THE SPIRIT OF YAHWEH SHALL REST UPON HIM, --
THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING,
THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND MIGHT,
THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND REVERENCE OF YAHWEH;
SO WILL HE FIND FRAGRANCE IN THE REVERENCE OF YAHWEH,
AND NOT BY THE SIGHT OF HIS EYES WILL HE JUDGE,
NOR BY THE HEARING OF HIS EARS WILL HE DECIDE;
BUT HE WILL JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS THEM WHO ARE POOR,
AND DECIDE WITH EQUITY FOR THE OPPRESSED OF THE LAND,
AND HE WILL SMITE THE LAND WITH THE SCEPTRE OF HIS MOUTH,
AND WITH THE BREATH OF HIS LIPS WILL HE SLAY THE LAWLESS ONE;
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL BE THE GIRDLE OF HIS LOINS
AND FAITHFULNESS THE GIRDLE OF HIS REIGNS."

Omitting the next four verses, so beautifully descriptive of the Millennium, the tenth verse reads:

"AND THERE SHALL COME TO BE IN THAT DAY
A ROOT OF JESSE, WHICH SHALL BE STANDING
AS AN ENSIGN OF PEOPLES,
UNTO HIM SHALL NATIONS SEEK, --
AND HIS RESTING PLACE SHALL BE GLORIOUS."

Of this Prince it is truly said, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." The sceptre of his dominion is grace -- grace displayed in the Gospel, grace communicated by the spirit, is the grand instrument of maintaining his empire. He reveals his glory and imparts his benefits, and thereby attaches his subjects by ties at once the most forcible and the most engaging. A lovely assemblage of qualities characterizes the spirit and genius of his administration; an incomparable majesty, united to a most endearing condescension a spirit of benignity, joined to impartial justice, distinguishes his conduct. In his personal qualities, he is one endowed with the highest intellectual, and moral gifts by the direct influence of the divine spirit. Descended of the lineage of David, he yet becomes the sustainer and life-giver to all his forebears. (See also Matt. 22:42-45; Rev. 22:16; Psa. 45:16.) Only in Jesus Christ have the terms of this prediction, verification. Of him, the Lord through the Prophet further speaks (Isa. 55:4)

"Lo! AS A WITNESS TO THE PEOPLES HAVE I GIVEN HIM,
AS A LEADER AND COMMANDER TO THE PEOPLES:
Lo! A NATION THOU SHALT NOT KNOW SHALT THOU CALL,
AND A NATION WHICH HATH NOT KNOWN THEE
UNTO THEE SHALL RUN,
FOR THE SAKE OF YAHWEH THY GOD,
AND FOR THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL BECAUSE HE HATH ADORNED THEE."

The essential meaning of these verses is that the Messiah is to be the Savior not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. This is in accord with Isa. 49:6 - "I will give thee to become a light of nations, that my salvation may reach as far as the end of the earth." And now with still more directness does the Lord speak concerning his chosen One (Isa. 42:1-7)

"Lo! MY SERVANT -- I WILL UPHOLD HIM,
MY CHOSEN -- WELL-PLEASSED IS MY SOUL, --
I HAVE PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM,
JUSTICE -- TO THE NATIONS WILL HE BRING FORTH:
HE WILL NOT CRY OUT NOR WILL HE SPEAK LOUD, --
NOR CAUSE TO BE HEARD IN THE STREET HIS VOICE:
CANE THAT IS CRUSHED WILL HE NOT BREAK,
AND WICK THAT IS FADING WILL HE NOT QUENCH, --
FAITHFULLY WILL HE BRING FORTH JUSTICE:
HE WILL NOT FADE NOR WILL HE BE CRUSHED,
UNTIL HE ESTABLISH IN THE EARTH JUSTICE,
AND FOR HIS INSTRUCTION COASTLANDS WAIT.
THUS SAITH GOD HIMSELF --
YAHWEH --
CREATOR OF THE HEAVENS, THAT STRETCHED THEM FORTH,
OUT-SPREADER OF EARTH AND THE PRODUCTS THEREOF, --
GIVER OF BREATH TO THE PEOPLE THEREON,
AND OF SPIRIT TO THEM WHO WALK THEREIN --
I YAHWEH HAVE CALLED THEE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND WILL FIRMLY GRASP THY HAND,

AND WILL KEEP THEE AND GIVE THEE
AS THE COVENANT OF A PEOPLE
AS THE LIGHT OF NATIONS:
TO OPEN EYES THAT ARE BLIND,
TO BRING FORTH --
OUT OF THE DUNGEON THE CAPTIVE,
OUT OF THE PRISON THE DWELLERS IN DARKNESS."

As if in immediate response to the wonderful commission of these verses, the great Personage, the Blessed of the Lord, the Messiah himself appears, and in strains of exalted rejoicing announces his mission and its grand result-the restoration of a ruined world (Isa. 61:1-3)

"THE SPIRIT OF MY LORD YAHWEH IS UPON ME, --
BECAUSE YAHWEH
HATH ANOINTED ME TO TELL GOOD TIDINGS
TO THE OPPRESSED
HATH SENT ME TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED,
TO PROCLAIM
TO CAPTIVES LIBERTY,
TO THEM WHO ARE BOUND THE OPENING OF THE PRISON;
TO PROCLAIM
THE YEAR OF ACCEPTANCE OF YAHWEH AND
THE DAY OF AVENGING OF OUR GOD:
TO COMFORT ALL WHO ARE MOURNING;
TO APPOINT UNTO THE MOURNERS OF ZION --
TO GIVE UNTO THEM
A CHAPLET INSTEAD OF ASHES,
THE OIL OF JOY INSTEAD OF MOURNING,
THE MANTLE OF PRAISE INSTEAD OF THE SPIRIT OF DEJECTION, --
SO SHALL THEY BE CALLED
THE OAKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
THE PLANTATION OF YAHWEH:
THAT HE MAY GET HIMSELF GLORY."

Thus, and much more did the inspired Prophet speak concerning the little Babe of Bethlehem. Rather, thus spoke the Infinite One, through the lips of a mortal, the sublime message of salvation as it centered in him of whom he testified, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And shall not these glorious promises be fulfilled? Thus saith the Lord: "My word that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in that whereunto I have sent it." - Isa. 55:11.

O weary and care-worn souls, at this Christmas season look up and behold the glorious vision! It is no mere dream of delight to be presently swept away by the never-failing stream of woe: nay, it is the joy that is set before us. And, if we but cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, he, by his almighty power, will bring us safely to it, though perhaps, through much tribulation. Does not the very thought of his promises lighten the burden of the cross? Sorrows, conflicts, and perplexities may be thickening around us; let them only cause us to cry out with greater earnestness: "Thy Kingdom come!" In the sick chamber, or the place of heart breaking toil; in the lonely garret, or the full house in which we may sojourn as strangers among ungenial spirits; by the newly opened grave, or in the forsaken home; wherever the load of human anguish presses most heavily, let us, even in sorrow, rejoice that the time of suffering will soon be over, and then God shall wipe away

all tears from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there any more be mourning, nor crying, nor pain. For all God's promises are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." - Luke 2:15.

Then be you glad, good people,
At this time of the year;
And light you up your candles,
For His star it shineth clear.

- *W. J. Siekman.*

Nativity

"Silent night! holy night!
All is calm, all is right
Round yon virgin mother and Child!
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

"Silent night! holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born,
Christ, the Savior, is born.

"Silent night! holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light;
Radiant beams Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth."

A Glimpse of God's Plan

"According to the eternal purpose which he [God] purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." - Eph. 3:11.

THE Bible was given for man's benefit; therefore the Bible account of creation has to do with man and the place of man's habitation, the earth. The first words of the Bible tell us that *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* The "heavens" here mentioned is that great expanse in which God placed the sun, moon, and stars. The earth is the place of man's habitation. Before creating man, God created the birds, fish, cattle, and beasts of the field. Then he created man in his own image. He created them male and female and gave them power to bring forth children.

The account of man's creation is given in the second chapter of Genesis. There we read, *"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"* (Gen. 2:7). Notice that God did not *give* man a soul. He made man's body out of the elements of the earth, and animated that body with the breath of life, in order that man might be a living being, to enjoy the blessings of life in that beautiful Eden home where God had placed him. Man was not given a soul, separate and distinct from himself, but when he was created he *"became* a living soul." In other words, no man *has* a soul, but every man *is* a soul. God designates the various animals as "souls." (See Gen. 1:20 margin and Num. 31:28.) Every living creature is a "soul."

God then gave man a law to govern his life. The keeping of God's law meant the continuance of life and the blessings of Eden. Disobedience meant death and the loss of all the blessings man enjoyed (Gen. 2:16, 17). God had previously created the angelic hosts. These are his heavenly sons, who shouted for joy when he began his work in connection with man by laying the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4, 7). They would watch the work in progress and when the highest earthly creatures, perfect man and woman, were created in the image of God, there would be great joy in heaven. All God's creation being perfect (Deut. 32:4), there would be nothing then to mar the happiness of every creature in heaven and earth.

THE BEGINNING OF SIN

From the time of creation there was perfect peace and harmony amongst all creatures in heaven and earth. Not a stain of sin, nor mark of evil, marred the happiness of the sons of God, angelic or human.

One of the brightest and most beautiful of the angelic hosts was Lucifer. Like all of God's creatures, he was perfect from the day that he was created, but iniquity began to creep into him (Ezek. 28:15). He was "lifted up because of his beauty" (Ezek. 28:17). He became proud and selfishly ambitious, seeking to live like Jehovah himself (Isa. 14:12-14). By this we could understand that he sought the worship of man, which rightly belongs only to God. Thus he became rebellious against God, and planned how he might divert man's worship to himself. From that time Lucifer became "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" (Rev. 20:2).

By deception Lucifer induced Eve to break God's command, by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree and passing it on to her husband. Knowing this was against the command of God, he ate also, and God's law was broken in a simple act of disobedience (Gen. 3:1-6; 1 Tim. 2:14). Under the

test, man had failed, and the justice of God must now bring the penalty upon him. They were turned out of Eden into a condition which was far from being perfect, there to gain their food by sweat of face, until they should return to the dust (Gen. 3:17-19). This is what Adam did for nine hundred and thirty years before he died (returned to the dust). Thus the wages of Adam's sin was his death, by gradual process lasting nine hundred and thirty years. Dying, he surely died, according to the command (Gen. 2:17).

His children were born after he was turned out of Eden and while he was in an imperfect condition, hence they were born imperfect, inheriting sin and imperfection from their father. This imperfection has passed to all of Adam's posterity; therefore all die (Rom. 5:12; 6:23).

Be it noted that the wages of sin is *death*, and not eternal torment. God does not eternally torment any; such a thing is contrary to his nature,- and never entered his mind (Jer. 19:5). Sin began in Lucifer by his rebellion. Sin entered the world of mankind by Adam's disobedience, and has passed upon all his children. Because of this all die. But God has made a loving provision for every man through the death of his only begotten Son. All who die in Adam will in due time have a full, fair opportunity to gain life for ever in perfect happiness, free from death and all it implies -- aches, pains, sickness, infirmity, and the ills which man is now experiencing (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; 1 Tim. 2:4-6).

THE PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE

After a considerable lapse of time from the creation and fall of man God called Abraham and promised him that in his offspring all mankind should be blessed (Gen. 12:13; Gen. 22:15-18). God had previously stated that the offspring of the woman should bruise the head of "that old serpent the devil." This was when the first man and woman were about to be turned out of Eden, with the curse of death upon them (Gen. 3:15). This statement was God's promise of a coming deliverance for man from the power of the Devil. It meant that a deliverer should come from the offspring of the woman, who would destroy the Devil and bring blessing to man. The promise made to Abraham showed that the long-looked-for Deliverer was to be of Abraham's children. Perhaps Abraham thought his son Isaac would be the one; but not so. Isaac and his son Jacob were greatly blessed by God, but they did not fulfill the promise. Neither became the blesser or Deliverer of mankind.

At Jacob's death his twelve sons and their families, known as the Children of Israel (Jacob's name was changed to Israel), became a special people to God above all others (Ex. 19:5). They were the descendants of Abraham, and so long as obedient to their God, received many favors, but did not, as a people, become the great Deliverer of the world of mankind, as they may have hoped. Moses, their leader and lawgiver, prophesied that the great Deliverer should be one of their brethren (Deut. 18:15). Many great men arose in Israel after Moses, such as Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, and others, but none of these proved to be the Deliverer.

From time to time the prophets of Israel kept the hopes of the faithful alive, that God would send a mighty One who would fulfill the promise made to Abraham. In time this promise was limited to the house of David; the statement being that God would set David's children upon his throne for ever (Psa. 132:11, 12). This would give the thought that the coming Deliverer would be a great King, one who would sit upon David's throne -- the throne of the Lord (1 Chron. 28:23). The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied concerning the Deliverer, the great Messiah, that he would be a branch (offspring) of David, and that as a king he would reign and prosper, and execute justice and judgment in the earth (Jer. 23:5, 6). Thus the faithful in Israel would be looking for their long promised Messiah as a great Prophet and a great King.

When the great Deliverer came, the faithful recognized him, but the majority rejected him even though all were in expectation of him (Luke 3:15). *The great Deliverer, the seed of Abraham, is Christ* (Gal. 3:16).

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), and often repeated to others, would thoroughly impress upon all true Israelites that at some future time there would be born of a woman of the Jewish people a holy child, who would in some way (which they could not then understand) become a great King and bring blessing to all peoples of the earth.

Words such as those of the Prophet Isaiah given to us in chapter 9, verses 6 and 7, would lead them to this expectation. The words of the Prophet are *"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 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 with judgment and with justice . . . for ever."*

Christians realize that these words are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, though only partially fulfilled as *yet*. The greater fulfillment is yet future. The birth of Jesus is *one* of the greatest events in human history. The place of Jesus' birth, as all know, was Bethlehem. This was according, to the words of the Prophet long before the event took place (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:5, 6).

There was no great pomp and show surrounding the birth of the Great One. Each one whom God chose to take part in this great act was humble, meek, and possessed of great faith in God's promises. Both Mary and her husband were poor, as no doubt were the shepherds to whom the angels brought their message of joy.

In heaven there would be great rejoicing and a host of angels were ready to take their part in this great event. While others slept, Jesus was born, and the angels, led by the angel of the Lord, brought their message of joy and song of happiness to the shepherds -- keeping sheep. The angel of the Lord brought glad tidings which shall be unto all people. All have not heard these glad tidings yet, but we look by faith to the time when all shall have heard, and all shall bow to the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:7-11).

A RANSOM FOR ALL

When Jesus grew to manhood and was heralded by John the Baptist as the Messiah, the Jews were disappointed in him. They were looking for a leader greater than Moses, a general greater than Joshua, a king far greater than David or Solomon, who would deliver them from the subjection of the Romans, and make of them a great and mighty nation. The meek and lowly Nazarene was rejected by them, and thus Jesus became "despised and rejected of men" as the Prophet had said the Messiah would be (Isa. 53:3). They had set their minds upon the prophecies which spoke of the might and power and glory of their Messiah, but overlooked those which spoke of his humiliation and sufferings. They forgot that God's Prophet had said that he should be "led as a lamb to the slaughter," that he should "pour out his soul unto death," and "make his soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53:3-12). These prophecies and many others were fulfilled in Jesus when he came to earth, but those which speak of his glory and power are yet to be fulfilled. Then the hopes of the Jews respecting the Messiah and the expectations of Christians respecting Christ's second coming will be more than fulfilled.

Why should Jesus pour out his soul unto death? Why should he make himself an offering for sin?

Briefly the answer is this: Man, because of sin, dies. "*The wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6:23). Sin entered the world by one man's disobedience -- the disobedience of Adam (Rom. 5:12) -and has passed upon all men, for the offspring of Adam are all born imperfect, he having fallen from his perfect condition before any children were born to him. Thus "all in Adam die" (1 Cor. 15:21, 22). Before man can have hope of everlasting life a ransom must be found for him, a "corresponding price" for the first man whose sin brought death. If such could be provided, then all who die because of Adam's transgression could be given hope of life. God had promised to ransom man from the power of death (Hos. 13:14). Where was the ransom to be found? Not amongst fallen man. None of these can redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him (Ps. 49:7). They are all imperfect, therefore cannot provide the ransom for man. Jesus was a perfect man, because he was "the only begotten Son of God." God was his Father (Luke 1:30-35). Jesus said that he came to give himself a ransom (Matt. 20:28), and the Apostle says that the man Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). Jesus further said, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Jesus by reason of his great sacrifice provided the ransom price, which "in due time" (1 Tim. 2:6) will bring to every man (*He died for all*; Heb. 2:9) a release from the death in Adam, and give to all, one full, fair opportunity of salvation and life everlasting. Thus "all the families of the earth" are to be blessed in him, according to God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Jesus' teaching and example are the finest ever given to man, and have done much to make the world better, but his death was the all important matter. From the Cross there radiates the only real hope for humanity.

Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, highly exalted (Phil. 2:7-11) and given "all power" (Matt. 28:18). As the risen, exalted Lord, he has power to bring to mankind the benefits of his sacrifice, but that work will not be completed until other features of God's plan and purpose are fulfilled.

THE TRUE CHURCH

The blessing and deliverance of mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ is the purpose of his Second Coming. All the prophecies relating to his power and glory will then be fulfilled, as those relating to his suffering and death were fulfilled at his First Advent. Meanwhile, another work has been in progress-the development of the Church of Christ. The true Church is not composed of one nor all of the church organizations or denominations. It is made up of the faithful followers of Jesus, whether they have been inside or outside of church denominations.

Those who are truly followers of Jesus are given many precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4). They will be with Christ in his Kingdom (Luke 12:32; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). They will share his throne and his glory (Rev. 3:21; Rev. 20:4; Col. 3:4). Theirs is a heavenly inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3, 4). As the Gospel has been preached amongst the nations, those with an ear to hear have responded to its invitation, and conformed to the conditions of discipleship. These have not been a great number, but few, "a little flock." These have lived and died, and slept in death, awaiting the return of the Lord for their reward. At the Lord's return they rise from the dead first and are made partakers of the First Resurrection to share the honor and glory of Christ. Those of the true Church living at the Lord's return, do not sleep in death; but death to them is a change from a human to a heavenly condition. See 1 Cor. 15:20, 38, 50-52; 1 Thess. 4:14-18; Rev. 20:4-6; Phil. 3:7-11.

This class is spoken of under different figures of speech. In 1 Cor. 12:12, 27 they are spoken of as the body of Christ, Jesus being the head. As a class they are spoken of as the "bride" of Christ.

The union of the members of the Church with Jesus their Head is the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). When this has taken place, then the true Church of Christ, with him in power and glory, sharing his great Kingdom, will share his work, and with him invite "whosoever will" to come and "drink of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

"THY KINGDOM COME"

For nineteen hundred years the hope of the Christian has been the Second Coming of the Lord, and the establishment of his Father's Kingdom on earth. These have prayed from the heart: *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."* This is the kingdom which will bring deliverance to mankind, and which will bless all the families of the earth with the opportunity of life, liberty, and happiness eternal. The Revelator saw in symbolic vision the present order of things passed away and all things made new. After seeing the Devil, the adversary of God and oppressor of man (Rev. 20:1-3), bound, he saw a new heaven and a new earth, a new order of things, and the present order of things passed away. He saw the time when death will be no more, when sorrow and suffering and pain will be ended.

He saw One on the throne (Christ, the new King of all mankind) saying: *"He that overcometh shall inherit these things"* -- the blessings of life, and freedom from sorrows and suffering, and the oppression of the Devil (Rev. 21:1-7). These blessings are for all, even those in the grave. To this end God has provided a resurrection of the dead through Christ his Son. Jesus said that the time was coming when those in the graves would hear his voice and come forth (John 5:28). The Revelator further saw a river of life proceeding to man from the throne of God and the Lamb, and Christ and his Bride, the Church, glorified, inviting whosoever will to come and drink of the water of life freely (Rev. 22:1-3, 17). The Apostle Peter spoke of "times of restitution of all things" when Christ should return. Restitution means a restoration of something lost. Through sin, man lost life and his Eden home. Jesus said that he came to "seek and to save that which was lost." In his Kingdom, the earth is to be made beautiful and fruitful. (See Isa. 35:1-10 and Ezek. 36:35 for proof that earth will be like Eden.) Man will then be given a full opportunity to live for ever (Ezek. 18:19-23), but those who are disobedient will be destroyed from amongst the people (Acts 3:19-23).

When Christ's work on behalf of man is complete, every knee shall bow to Jesus' name; all living creatures in heaven and earth will praise God (Rev. 5:13; Phil. 2:7-11). Every follower of Jesus desires his kingdom to come. The disciples asked him when it would come and for signs of his return and kingdom (Matt. 24:3). The Lord's reply (verses 7 and 8) tells us plainly that world wars and events following are the signs that his Kingdom is near. Before man gets the blessings of this kingdom he is to pass through a great wave of trouble which will completely destroy the present order, upon the ruins of which Christ's Kingdom -- the new heaven and earth -- will be established. The Bible message for today is *"The Kingdom of God is at hand,"* which should be a message of joy and hope to all who desire better things for mankind.

- Fred Musk, England

Thanksgiving

"Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever." - Psalm 136:11

TO THE Christian, every day is a day of thanksgiving. The Psalmist expresses this attitude: "O Lord, ... we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever." "Giving thanks always," says the Apostle, "for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ unto God, even the Father" - Psalm 79:13; Eph. 5:20.

The appointment by the head of the nation of a special Day of Thanksgiving is profitable to the Christian, however, for it prompts him to an enumeration of his many and infinite blessings. When we attempt this we are impelled to exclaim with Paul: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable bounty" -- which is just another way of saying, "The half has never been told." "Unspeakable" here means not something which cannot be spoken of, but that which has not been fully spoken or declared.

For the gift of Jesus, our Savior; for the "peace with God" which comes as a result of his sacrifice; for the further "grace wherein we stand" -- the great High Calling to the Priesthood--as a result of which "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God"; for the daily experiences, testings, trials, and for the daily supply of grace which enables us to benefit eternally by these temporal afflictions--all these are but a part of his "unspeakable bounty." Eternity, and the cumulative capacity of "all saints" will be required to realize and to tell the complete story of our Father's munificence - 2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 2:18.

The Apostle Paul made what might be described as the first general Thanksgiving proclamation, on the Areopagus, or Hill of Mars, in Athens. After gracefully complimenting the philosophers on their regard for religion, he referred to the altar he had observed in passing through their streets, inscribed *"To an unknown god,"* and continued:

"Whom . . . ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you... . He is the Lord of heaven and earth ... He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. . . . All nations of men ... should seek the Lord ... for in him we live and move and have our being.... And ... he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained - Acts 17:23-31.

The God that Paul declared is almost as "unknown" to the modern world as he was to the ancient Athenians. The Apostle did not attempt to enlighten the Athenians in respect to God except in regard to the three broad generalities about him: He is the Creator, he is the Preserver, he is the Restorer, of man's life. The modern world shares the skepticism of the Athenians regarding the third of these affirmations--the doctrine of the *resurrection*. While the modern religionist, like the ancient, is willing to grant that God (through some partly understood scientific laws) was the Creator, and, in a vague and secondary way, is the preserver or helper of those who "help themselves," when it comes to the future life, he seems to find it easier to believe in something intangible and visionary than in the simplicity of the Scriptural Resurrection. To believe in *that* he must *believe* in God! The idea of man coming back, through a resurrection, to solid earth and veritable flesh and blood is as absurd even to the majority of professed Christians as it was to the ancient Areopagites, who "mocked when they heard of the resurrection of the dead."

Today the true Christian stands, as alien as was Paul in Athens, in the midst of another and greater Mars' Hill -- a world preponderantly committed to reliance for safety and well-being upon force of arms and the god of war. From every direction the winds bring the sound of clanging machinery forging the weapons of warfare, the blare of martial music and the hoarse shouts of the multitude of military hero-worshippers. Few indeed hear the Voice speaking behind them, saying: "Yet have I set *my* king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron" - Psalm 2.

Oh sing unto Jehovah a new song:
Sing unto Jehovah, all the earth.
Sing unto Jehovah, bless his name;
Show forth his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
His marvellous works among all the peoples.

Say among the nations, Jehovah *reigneth*:

The [new] world is established that *it* cannot be moved:
He *will* judge the peoples with equity.
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
Let the field exult, and all that is therein;
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy
Before Jehovah; for he cometh,
For he cometh to judge the earth:
He *will* judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with his truth.

Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
Truth springeth out of the earth;
And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.
Yea, Jehovah *will* give that which is good.

Praise ye Jehovah! - Psalms 96 and 85.

- H. E. Hollister

Dwelling in the Secret Place

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." - Psa. 91:1

WHAT A wealth of comfort and consolation there is in the ninety-first Psalm! From first to last it is pervaded with that much needed "comfort of the Scriptures" wherewith the saints of God have been helped to meet the trials associated with Christian life. How good our gracious God has been in directing inspired minds to write down such gems of comfort as this Psalm represents. For suffering saints to have no mercyseat would be tragic indeed, and equally tragic would be the absence of such words in season to him that is weary as are contained in the language of this Psalm, appropriately entitled in some Bibles: "Happy state of the godly."

In the first verse of this gem of comfort we should note very carefully two outstanding words, namely, "dwelleth" and "abide"-"He that dwelleth . . . shall abide." Both of these words signify something of permanency, a continuance in the same place, and in the enjoyment of perpetual rest. Indeed it is solely on the state implied in these terms that all the remainder of the Psalm's blessings may be known in experience. No transitory condition or a mere fluctuating blessing can be the fulfillment of this portion of our Father's Word. It represents a particularly high degree of the favor and blessing of the Lord. So much so that it may be said of this secret place of close fellowship with God, as it is said respecting the narrow way by which such favors are gained, "few there be that find it." Like all of God's special blessings this also requires degrees. of devotion and dedication not appreciated by the greater number. The text therefore appropriately singles out the individual. "He that dwelleth in the secret place," he whose faith and devotion has become settled and habitual, such a one shall then **abide** under the shadow of God's protection. And as the rest of the Psalm reveals, this is a priceless heritage. Here, from every stormy wind that blows, there is a calm, a sure retreat. From every assault of the Adversary here is a hiding place beyond the portal of which he can never come. Pestilence may stalk about, cruel arrows fly around, with wasting destruction abroad, but "there shall no evil befall thee," is the promise to the one who abides under the shadowing care of the Almighty. Happy, then, that one who, enjoying this secret place, can say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and fortress; my God; in Him will I trust." - Psa. 91:2.

Hearts Searched in the Secret Place

It is of great importance that we think of this secret place as an environment congenial only to such as are pure in heart and life. To be in such close contact with the Most High would be anything but pleasant to any other than the pure hearted. As illustrating how the holiness of God effects imperfection we call to mind the experience of Isaiah. He wrote, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, . . . Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isa. 6:1, 5.) In similar strain Daniel relates a like effect as he stood before a messenger sent from the presence of God: "There remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." (Dan. 10:8.) If these holy Prophets were thus overwhelmed with such visions of God, how impossible the thought that any thinking to enter His presence presumptuously and without the required holiness of character would find themselves in congenial environments. Therefore to now in our probationary days abide in this secret place, and to rejoice in its atmosphere while experiencing its protections, will mean purity of heart and life. As with the Prophets Isaiah and Daniel so it will be with us in

coming into the presence of God, our own lips and comeliness will shame us before "His eyes as lamps of fire."

In considering our opening text, let us then concern ourselves with what is required of such as may dwell in the secret place of the Most High. Perhaps it is for the very purpose of making clear the conditions necessary for close contact with God in both the present life and the future, that we have been given several repetitions of these requirements. One such passage is found in Psalm 24:3-5. It reads, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Another such text is found in Psalm 15:1, 2. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor." Again we read, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." - Isa. 57:15.

Such passages as these reveal that an entrance into this favored place is a privilege associated with very exacting requirements. Let us note them carefully. Clean hands, such hands as move only under the impulse of divine love. A pure heart, a heart out of which good treasure habitually flows-without vanity or deceit, without sham or pretense; upright conduct, a sanctified tongue, and an abundance of contrition and humility. The possession or the absence of these in a character will be made manifest in the secret place. If possessed, the shadow of the Almighty will be a joy and delight; if absent, there may indeed be a pretended simulation of that joy and delight, albeit a false sense of security only.

"The secret place of the Most High" is needed even by the most sincere of heart. Are there any so fully purified in heart that the search-light of the Word will reveal nothing contrary to the will of God? Surely not. Even a human mind is ready to acknowledge the wisdom of the suggestion that "Could we see ourselves as others see us, it would from many a blunder free us." How much more true would be the expression: Could we see ourselves as God sees us apart from our dependence upon Christ, surely it would discover to us many things far from a perfect holiness. It is the realization of this very fact that makes the prayer of David seem so fitting on our own 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." (Psa. 139: 23, 24.) The atmosphere of the secret place will create such a request as this, and make the heart ready for the Lord's inspection. There in that environment, if there be any conventional, outward simulation, a form of godliness without the power, the prayer will be quickened, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Psa. 51:10.) There in the presence of God it will be remembered that His Word "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12.) And recognizing this as a necessary operation of the Word if so be that we desire to be sanctified thereby, there will be a real fervency in the prayer: "Order my steps in Thy Word," and "lead me in the paths of righteousness for Thy name's sake." (Psa. 119:133; 23:3.) This will mean dwelling and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty.

Under His Wings Shalt Thou Trust

Having examined some of the requirements to be met by such as will abide in the secret place of the Almighty, let us turn to some consideration of the things to be expected in the daily enjoyment of this favored place. "If we begin each day by first of all surrendering ourselves to Christ, this enthronement of Christ within will carry with it, if it be a real thing, the dethronement of self. Full surrender to Him implies His full mastery over us; and till that is both acknowledged as a thing that ought to be, and experienced as a thing that is, there can be nothing in us of that joy and freedom and power that belongs to the really consecrated heart.

"What joy it gives, and strength too, to begin each day by feeling, 'On this day once again I am to live simply as a servant of Jesus Christ: His will and not my own will is to sway me every hour!' 'A servant of Jesus Christ!' then I cannot be the servant of sin, I must aim to be holy as my Master is holy. 'A servant of Jesus Christ!' then I will not be the servant of men: the maxims of the world will not rule me; I am under orders only to my Master in heaven. 'A servant of Jesus Christ!' then, if I want to know Him, I must walk even as He walked, seeking always to plant my feet in His footsteps. As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, to see how their work should be done, so my eyes must wait upon the Lord. If His service is sometimes difficult, I must not complain: He may use me as He will. And at the end of all I will be more than satisfied if I only hear Him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

"To be a true and faithful servant such as this I must put myself daily into Almighty hands, and say, 'Into Thy hands I commit my spirit' for this day and every day. . . . These words Jesus Himself used when, on the cross, He was looking out on death; but they had been, before that, the words of one who was looking out, not on death, but on the difficulties and trials of life. (See Psa. 31:5.) If they were enough for my Master to die upon, they are more than enough for me to live upon, and so I say:

"Into Thy protecting hands I commit my spirit for the **keeping** of it. Life is full of temptations, the world full of snares; I cannot keep myself, but Thou canst keep me from falling; I trust myself to Thee.

"Into thy **tender** hands I commit my spirit for the **comforting** of it. The sorrows of my life may be many, the waters deep, the furnace hot; I may have thick darkness over me soon in which I could lose all my joy, but if Thou wilt whisper to me then, 'I am with thee still,' I will fear no evil.

"Into Thy **correcting** hands I commit my spirit for the **sanctifying** of it. I am willing to be chastened if only the chastening makes me purer than before. Take what way Thou wilt with me, I will bless the hand that smites.

"Into Thy **moulding** hands I commit my spirit for the **consecrating** of it. Use me to Thy glory. I would not live to myself. Let self be killed that Christ may be all in me. Turn me as the clay is turned in the potter's hands. I would fain be a vessel for the Master's use, filled with the Master's grace, and Thou canst make me so.

"And then if death should come even suddenly, I will hear Thee calling, and reply, 'Into Thy **redeeming** hands I commit my spirit for the **glorifying** of it. Thy creating hands fashioned **me**, Thy preserving hands have kept me, Thy guiding hands have led me, Thy appealing hands have beckoned to me, Thy smiting hands have chastened me, but they were always saving hands that delivered me, and sheltering hands that covered me. I ever found them to be loving hands, I have proved them to be strong, and so I trust myself entirely and for ever to Thee; 'Into Thy hands I commit my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.'"

- J. J. Blackburn

The Question Box

James 1:25; Matt. 10:28; Matt. 24:28.

Question:

In James 1:25 we read of "the perfect law of liberty." The language here employed seems contradictory. On the one hand "law" is defined as a rule of action prescribed by authority. "Liberty," on the other hand, suggests freedom from restraint. What has "law" to do with "liberty?" Do they not mutually exclude each other?

Answer:

At first glance it would seem so. Closer study, however, discloses that while the terms are self-contradictory, the statement itself gives expression to a remarkable truth. Other instances of this paradoxical form of expression may be found in the New Testament. To mention but one, we quote 2 Cor. 6:9, 10: "As unknown and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Here the Apostle likens himself to the son of a millionaire, not yet in possession of his future inheritance, but nevertheless able to draw on the infinite resources of his Father. From one point of view he had nothing, yet, since Jehovah himself was his portion, did not the Apostle truly possess all things? No doubt from one standpoint he was poor; yet who could appraise his value to the Church, and how rich he has made us by the lavish manner in which he spent and was himself spent in the service of the Master and in the service of us all.

So it is with this peculiar expression, "the perfect law of liberty." It is a paradox. Let us examine it. It can be best understood perhaps by means of an illustration. Here, let us say, is a boy to whom has been given an untrained dog. The dog is totally unacquainted with the boy. It is taken out into the fields when, without the least warning, it breaks loose from the boy and scampers away, paying no heed whatever to the boy's whistles and calls. Here we have an illustration of liberty without law.

Eventually the dog is recaptured and placed on the end of a chain. Thereafter, whenever the boy and the dog go out for a walk, the dog is always on the end of a chain. He is allowed no freedom. This illustrates law without liberty.

During this period of law without liberty, however, the boy is teaching the dog to love and respect him. No one is allowed to feed the dog except the boy. The boy speaks encouraging words to him when he is well-behaved; scolds him at other times. The day comes at last when they go out together to the same fields as they went on their first walk. The chain is removed, and again the dog scampers off. The boy whistles and what happens? The dog gladly heeds the call of his master and scampers back. The chain of steel is no longer there. Another one, however, has taken its place—an even stronger one. It is the cord of love and understanding woven during the training period. Here is an illustration of the law of liberty.

So long as the dog remained untrained, he was unfit for the law of liberty. Law without liberty, as illustrated in the chain, must be his only portion. From this homely illustration we believe it will be apparent that the perfect law of liberty mentioned by the Apostle James is for the well disposed only; that is to say, it is applicable, at the present time, only to members of the new

creation -- the little flock. Others are still under the Mosaic Law, as servants, not fit for "the liberty wherewith Christ makes free" the sons, or else they are under the condemnation of the original law, the condemnation of death.

Before these, Jews and Gentiles alike, will be fit for the perfect law of liberty, they must be placed under the rule of a rod of iron, for a thousand years. During that time they will be shepherded by Christ and his Church, who will administer the laws of the Kingdom with justice tempered with mercy.

Not until the close of the Millennial Age, when the willful evildoers shall have been cut off in the Second Death, will the race, proved perfect and fully in accord with the divine standard, be put under the perfect law of liberty-love and its golden rule.

Question:

Will you please explain Mathew 10:28, where we read:

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

If we are a soul and do not possess a soul, how are we to understand the use of "body" and "soul" in this Scripture?

Answer:

For a proper understanding of this text we must first ascertain the Bible answer to the question: "What is man?"

There are two general views on this subject which, while each contains elements of truth, are, on the whole, misleading. One is the so-called orthodox view; the other, the so-called scientific view. Neither represents the Bible viewpoint, and those who hold either are hereby prevented from securing the benefit which the Bible teaching would have on their hearts and lives.

The position of orthodox theology, briefly stated, is that man is, a composite being of three parts--body, spirit, and soul. The body, it is believed, is born after the usual manner of animal birth, except that at the time of birth God interposes and, in some inscrutable manner, implants in the body a -spirit and a soul which, being parts of God himself, are indestructible, and therefore can never die. These two parts, spirit and soul, orthodoxy is unable to separate and distinguish, and hence uses the terms interchangeably.

Scientists answer the question, "What is man?" by stating that man is an animal of the highest type yet developed. They offer no suggestion as to a future life for any individual, but, believing they can trace an evolutionary development of mankind in past ages, are disposed to the view that the race may by natural processes (and apart from the power and purpose of a personal God) yet be developed into a superior condition to that of the present.

The Bible answer to the question recognizes man as composed of two elements, body and spirit. By body is meant the physical organism; by spirit, the animating power -- the breath of life. The union of these two elements produces the man himself, the sentient being--the soul. As we read in Gen. 2:7: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

It is the teaching of the Bible that when the spirit is separated from the body, the man (that is to say, the sentient being, the soul) ceases to exist. To quote from James 2:26: "The body without [or apart from] the spirit is dead." According to the Bible, any hope of a future life for an individual man who has died must lie in the power and purpose of God. The Gospel undertakes to prove that God has both the power and the purpose to accomplish a resurrection for all, and that everlasting life will be offered to all, on certain conditions, either in this Age or in the Age to come.

The Greek word twice rendered "soul" in our text is *psuche*. It is frequently translated "life" and indeed is so translated a little later in this same discourse of our Lord. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (verse 39). This variation in translation has served to confuse, creating the impression that "life" is one thing and "soul" another, and that a man might lose his life without losing his soul. Such confusion is particularly noticeable in Mark 8:35-37: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In this passage the word *psuche* is twice translated "life" and twice "soul." Had the word been uniformly translated the truth would not have been obscured.

In the light of the foregoing discussion let us return to Matthew 10:28. What does our Lord mean when he says: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul?" Does he mean that when the body is killed there is a mysterious, invisible something called a soul, which men are not able to kill, and which, therefore, escapes death at their hands and continues to live on -- apart from the body? Such is the orthodox view, which, as we have indicated, we cannot share. But even those who hold it should be on guard against embracing the further error of supposing that such an escaped soul is possessed of the quality of immortality -- deathlessness. The closing words of this very verse make that plain. They speak of one (God himself) who has the power to destroy both soul and body.

But, if the orthodox view be wrong, what is the proper one? I answer: Our Lord well knew that when men killed the body, they then and there destroyed also the present life, the soul, the sentient being. He was not denying this obvious fact. The disciples, however, had hope of a future life - a life beyond the power of the killer to harm, much less to destroy. This hope of life came to them through the Gospel-came as the result of the redemption provided by God himself, through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. This hope of a future life was shortly to be confirmed to them by our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Because he lived they would have grounds for believing that they, too, would live.

The present life they would lose, whether men killed their body or not -- they would lose it in old age if not sooner. But their future life, their prospect for eternity-this lay in the power of God. He it is, then, and not men, whom they should fear.

Benjamin Wilson, in the *Emphatic Diaglott* translation, by using the word "life" and by supplying the word "future" has given us what we cannot but believe is the true meaning of our Lord's words. We close this discussion by quoting his translation, which reads as follows:

"Be not afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot destroy the (future) life; but rather fear him who can utterly destroy both life and body in Gehenna."

Question:

Please explain Matthew 24:28, which reads: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Answer:

Before inquiring as to the meaning of the expression, let us first secure a better translation.

To begin with, the first word of the verse, the particle "for" should be eliminated. It *has* been eliminated in the *Revised Standard Version*, the *Diaglott* and other more accurate translations. Scholars tell us that an earlier translator foisted this word "for" into the text because he imagined, erroneously, that the statement in verse 28 was intended to corroborate the statement in verse 27, where our Lord had likened his second advent to lightning emerging from the east and shining to the west.

Again, the word translated "eagles" includes all birds of rapine, and since *eagles do not feed on carrion*, the word vultures should be used here. A preferred translation is given by *Moflatt*: "Wherever the carcass lies, there will the vultures gather."

Now that we have this preferred translation before us, let us examine it. No less than five possible interpretations have come to my attention.

One interpretation is that the Jewish nation is represented by the carcass, while the eagles are the Roman armies, whose ensign is the eagle. Many able scholars have adopted this view, among them being Lightfoot, John Wesley, and Adam Clark. But this interpretation proceeds on the assumption that verse 27 refers to our Lord's return to destroy Jerusalem through the agency of the Romans in A.D. 70 -an assumption which is not confirmed by historical facts, and which introduces confusion into the interpretation of the rest of the chapter.

A second interpretation, one adopted by Chrysostom and others of the early Christian Fathers, is that the carcass represents Christ himself, and the eagles represent the members of the Church, gathering to him by faith throughout the Gospel Age.

A third interpretation is somewhat similar to the second one, except that the gathering together of the eagles is understood to mean the meeting with the Lord in the air, mentioned in 1 Thess. 4:17.

A fourth interpretation is the one put forth by Brother Russell. His view was approximately the same as that held by Chrysostom, except that he supplemented the thought (that the carcass represented Christ) by the additional thought that it also represented the truth concerning Christ and especially the food of "present truth," provided by our Lord during the period of his second presence.

However, their question, "Where, Lord?", may be understood in another way, in line with a further interpretation, which appeals to me as being, probably, the true one. In this, the fifth interpretation noted, the carcass represents *corruption*, and the vultures *judgment*. Let us consider this interpretation, and note how well it fits the context.

Our Lord had just been pointing out a coming time of *judgment*. It would, he had said, be a time of trouble, such as had not been previously in mankind's history. Elaborating his theme, he had reminded them that, except for the few who entered the ark with Noah, the flood had destroyed, not merely a few, but *all* of them. Again, he had observed that when Lot fled from Sodom *all*

others were destroyed; even Lot's wife had perished when she looked back. And he had likened these events to the conditions which would obtain during the period of his second advent (Matt. 24:21, 37-39; Luke 17:28-30). It was to all of this that the disciples had responded: "Where, Lord?" (Where will these judgments take place?)

Such a question indicated that, as yet, they understood very little of the ways of God. In their imperfect, immature point of view, God, being almighty, could do anything he chose. They failed to realize that there are some things which even God cannot do. He cannot violate his own principles. He cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13). This they had yet to learn. In their minds, Christ, did he but choose, could restore the kingdom to Israel "at this time" (Acts 1:6), or five hundred years hence, or five thousand. These judgments of which he had just been forwarning them, could take place in Jerusalem, if God so chose, or in Japan. They had yet to learn that God never has and never will act arbitrarily. *He cannot do so.*

To their question, "Where, Lord?" -- where shall these judgments take place? our Lord replied *in a way they would understand.* He replied with a well known Oriental proverb, based on a passage in the Book of Job (Job 39:30). "Where the slain are, *there is she* (the eagle, or vulture - Luke 17:27)."Wheresoever the carcass is, *there will* the vultures be gathered together." (Wheresoever corruption abounds, *there* God's judgments will be sent, to clean up the putrid mess.)

This has been the unvarying procedure on the part of Almighty God throughout the centuries. It is plainly to be seen in the case of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, *and will never be more true than in the judgment day of the nations in the end of the Gospel Age.*

What to do? Let the Prophet answer: "Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it *may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph. 2:3).

- P. L. Read

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