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There Is Nothing

"A little cloud . . . like a man's hand." - 1 Kings 18:44.

ELIJAH had been answered by the "God of fire"; had vindicated the name of the Lord; had converted a nation in one day. Now there awaited the fruit of that conversion - the ending of the pitiless drought of three and one-half years. He has ascended to the top of Carmel and casting himself down upon the earth, with bowed head, prays. His young lad attendant reaches the highest point of the long ridge of the mountain and, instructed, looks out over the wide expanse of the Mediterranean Sea. The boy gazes in the hope that the Prophet's earnest prayer may bring down the long-desired rain. The sun had sunk into the western sea. But after the sunset there followed the long white glow so common in the evenings of Eastern countries. Six times the youthful watcher went up and looked, and six times he reported: "There is nothing." The sky was still calm.

But at last out of the far horizon there arose a little cloud, the first that for days and months had passed across the heavens. It was no larger than an outstretched hand; but it grew in the deepening shades of evening, and quickly the whole sky was overcast, and the forests of Carmel shook in the welcome sound of those mighty winds which in Eastern regions precede a coming tempest. The cry of the boy from his mountain watch had hardly been uttered when the storm broke upon the plain, the rain descended, and the nation was delivered from its sufferings.

Here we have one of those parables of nature which, can be applied in many directions. It expresses the truth that often out of seeming nothingness, there arises the very blessing most desired.

"There is nothing." So it would seem as we look at the small materials with which we have to carry on the conflict with the great powers of nature. "There is nothing." So we say to ourselves when in the blank desolations of sorrow we look on the work that lies before us, feeling alone in the world. "There is nothing." So we think as we look into the vast expanse and see no visible trace of its eternal Maker and Ruler. There is the infinite space, and nothing, as far as we can see, beyond it. There is the perplexity and misery of mankind, and nothing to relieve it. We say, "O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down!" and no voice answers us. The silence of God oppresses our spirits.

But courage! Look up, despising not "the day of small things" (Zech. 4:10), for though we may indeed have searched "six times in vain, a "little cloud" even now appears in the heaven of human affairs. "The great events of history" says an acute French writer, "like the mysterious personages in old romances, come through a door in the wall which no one had noticed." And the greatest, unrecognized by mankind (Luke 21:35) is before us. To one divine event, slowly it may be, and uncertainly it may seem, but still steadily onward, the whole creation moves. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him" (Heb. 10:37; Rev. 1:7). "The Kingdom. of God is at the doors" (Matt. 24:33; Luke 21:31).

Not to the world only, but to each one of us, "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." Young and old, our time is passing away; we are every one of us drawing nearer to that day when we must face the judge of all mankind. God knows that we all have need of mercy-of his infinite mercy. Everyone who knows his own heart, knows how welcome is any thought that softens the severity of that judgment. How gladly we trust that the love which was manifested in Christ Jesus is indeed boundless, and overflows. "God be merciful to me a sinner" must be the prayer even of the best and purest of men.

We are all of us, young and old, beset more or less by the sophistries, the systems, the schools, the parties, which time and circumstances, which past ages or our own age, have cast up around us, and beside us, before us, and behind us. We are involved in their meshes, we walk in the grooves which they have made for us. We feel it a duty to go on as we have begun, walking round and round our own small circles, seeing only but a short way in advance, thinking much of what lies close before us, little of what lies 'beyond us. Yet none of these things of themselves constitute the whole or the essence of Christianity; Christ is still the pattern of his Church, he is the "little cloud" on the horizon, the harbinger of unnumbered blessings soon to fall upon suffering humanity.

Brethren in Christ, the Truth -- take hope! A new day is dawning; a new order draws nigh! "Gird up the loins of your mind, 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. 1:13). Put far from you "childish things," set your feet firmly in the "way of God," and take earnest heed to the words of the Apostle to his "son" Timothy: "Meditate upon these things; *give thyself wholly to them*" (1 Tim. 4:15).

To feel that there is a work before us to be done - to feel that God is with us, and that the world and the things of earth have no power to turn us from our purpose -- to have fears, and hopes, and pleasures, and pains, of which the worldly man knows nothing -- to feel that God in Christ has forgiven us all that is past, and henceforth bids us joyfully serve him in newness of life -- to have within our hearts that divine faculty of love which alone will outlast the great change of death -- to show forth in our characters some trace, however slight, of "the mind which was in Christ Jesus" -- this is to become a new, heavenly, unearthly creature which will survive when all else shall wax old and perish; which will have its abiding place in that "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

- *W. J. Siekman*

The Memorial

"This do in remembrance of me." - Luke 22:19.

ALL Christians should commemorate with deep devotion the anniversary of our Lord's death. To those who have been taught the deep things of God there is more than the remembrance of this event, there is a wondrous privilege. It is not only a remembrance of the feast, but it is a finger post to the future.

An important event in the history of the Israelites was memorialized by some outward ceremony or ritual. This was intended to deepen the impression and to prevent the occurrence from fading from the memory. Too often and too soon the freshness of an experience fades from the mind. For this reason God saw the necessity for constant reminders by outward observances to instill in the minds of the people any prominent feature of his eternal purpose.

THE PASSOVER AS A MEMORIAL

The feast of the Passover was instituted on such a basis. Here was a mighty and most striking deliverance of God's people by God's power. They must not forget it (Exodus 12:24). An annual ceremony must be established. Thus the feast of the Passover was outlined most carefully by the Creator, together with specific instructions that it should be perpetuated.

Obviously as time passed this feast became a reminder only of some act in remote history. But always linked with this reminder was the name of Jehovah-his greatness and his watchful care for his own. Jehovah's name and his greatness were inseparable from this feast.

"I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

This and similar exhortations were "that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws." - Psalm 105:45.

With God there is no hidden future-all is known to him. He saw his Son Jesus as the great Passover Lamb. His Plan included that greatest of all deliverances followed by the blessing of all the families of the earth. The human family was to be freed from sin and all its concomitants terminating in death. What a deliverance! Abraham saw it by faith and rejoiced. Joseph, the husband of Mary, had just a glimpse when he was told by God that the child should be named Savior.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE DISCIPLES

Jesus himself knew that he was the great Passover Lamb for the world. He tried to convey this thought to his disciples but they were so trammelled with earthly ideas of a kingdom with great pomp, power, and glory that they heeded not his words. Here is a lesson for us. Are we so attached to the affairs of this life that we fail to appreciate all that our Heavenly Father would have us know concerning the Memorial?

When the disciples inquired of the Master where they were to keep the annual Passover, he gave them instructions and on the Day of Preparation they had carried out his orders. No other thought, so far as we can gather, was in their minds but the partaking of the legal Passover. Jesus had other intentions. He was about to leave them. He wished to have an intimate, loving, farewell Supper --

something for them to remember; something for them to look forward to. They were not aware that they were on the threshold of the greatest event in human history! Illimitable results would follow this act.

WHO CAN UNDERSTAND?

We believe we are nearing the end of this Age. All the called, chosen and faithful of the Lord should be enjoying a deeper insight into the meaning and import of this last meal of our Redeemer with his loved ones. Jesus knew that his disciples would not be able to understand the deep things he knew and had in his mind, but he longed to convey as much as possible at that time. Symbolism is a powerful means of conveying a profound thought. He must convey to them the understanding that they were to have a share with him in a great undertaking to establish his Father's name in the earth, and to have a part in the great work of blessing all the families of the earth. Further, he must convey to them the fact that to reign with him they must suffer with him. His pathway must be their pathway, his suffering must be the precursor of their suffering; his glory would include their ultimate glorification. No human mind can grasp this. Only those begotten of God can do so. This act of begetting is entirely the result of the work of God; consequently, it may be said that only those to whom the Father reveals the great truth contained in the Memorial can fully and really enter into its height and depth, its length and breadth.

JESUS THE PASSOVER LAMB

It should be understood that the meal partaken of by the Lord and his disciples was not the Passover *Feast*, for it was yet the 14th day of Nisan. Feast day was the 15th. It is not reasonable to think that Jesus would break the Law. Luke records that Jesus definitely stated that he would "not eat thereof." If it was not the Passover Feast, what was it? Jesus saw himself as the lamb to be slain. Within a few hours he was to die; therefore, he instituted a simple ceremony that would live in their minds because it was of the deepest significance to them. He was chosen and begotten of God; they were chosen and, later, to be begotten of God. He was the Son of God; they were chosen and privileged to be sons of God. They were his brethren; he was their Elder Brother. How his heart must have yearned over them! How great his desire to do all that he could to help them.

Surely we can see what a very intimate, family atmosphere must have pervaded that sacred, very private, but very far-reaching event. He was to leave them; but he would see them again. A place in heaven he would prepare for them and eventually spend eternity with them. All that he thought and did for them, he thinks and does for us!

When he broke the bread and said, "This is my body which is *given for you: this do in remembrance of me*"; and when, after pouring the wine, he said further: This *cup* is the new testament in my blood, which is *shed for you*," he uttered great truths that they did not yet understand. The word "remembrance" that he used conveys the thought of "waiting for." What were they to wait for? Soon they would know, and then they would continue the Memorial feast annually "until he come." This the faithful followers of the Lord do, and have done for the last nineteen hundred years. Now our hopes are high, for we are nearing the time for his glorious return in power; when his first act is to gather together all those who are the chosen and begotten of his Father. In all conditions and circumstances, in peril and in danger, in sickness and in health, this simple feast has been kept.

INCREASED LIGHT

Very soon our Heavenly Father rewarded the faithful followers of the Lord by giving a deeper insight into the real significance of the bread and wine. It was the privilege of that faithful servant, Paul, to reveal the hidden meaning of the symbol used at the Lord's last Supper.

There is no evidence that Jesus ate of the bread or drank of the wine-rather the words go to show that he would wait for the time of the establishment of the Kingdom. In simple and expressive language, but with impelling force and power, the Apostle demonstrates that we enter into that breaking. When we partake and assimilate the bread, and it becomes part of us, this symbolizes that we are one with our Head and united to all other members of that Body. Paul in essence says, here is a mystery kept hid from the ages, that Christ is not composed of one person but is composed of many, all of whom become one! Christ is one, but comprises many members. - 1 Corinthians 12:12.

Evidently the great Apostle found it necessary to give the foundation of his interpretation of the symbol used in the Memorial and we find him saying, "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you." Paul was anxious that his fellow-members should see and know that the partaking of the emblems was more than a reminder of a sacrificial life and work finished at Calvary. For him, for them, and similarly for us, it is an entering into a covenant or agreement with the Lord Jesus and with his Father. Note the words of Jesus and see what a flood of light is thrown upon them by this understanding.

"And I covenant for you, even as my Father has covenanted for me, a Kingdom." - Luke 22:29, Diaglott.

Here was a loving intimacy, a sweet fellowship, that had never before been extended to members of the human family. Did the disciples appreciate these words when they were spoken? Have we appreciated them as much in the past as we do now? A greater knowledge of our loving Heavenly Father, accompanied by a wider experience of his purpose and way should endear this ceremony to us more and more. Our relationship to our Heavenly Father and to the Lord should be quickened and enhanced.

OUR ATTITUDE

Our Father, at this Memorial season, would have us carefully and prayerfully examine our relationship with him and his purpose. Frequently we quote, "Now are we sons of God." How have we become sons? Could we take this relationship of our own volition? Can we attain to this position by a demonstration of faith or of works? Is it a natural growth or development? John declares it to be a privilege or position given by God (John 1:12). Paul asserts that only those led by the spirit of God are his sons. To all those who have the assurance of being sons of God, what an intimate, reverential, homely feeling becomes associated with the partaking of the feast.

This knowledge that, by the grace of God, we are in a special relationship to him; that he has undertaken all on our behalf, that he will never leave us nor forsake us, will not puff us up. If rightly exercised we shall approach this Memorial with the deepest gratitude, with the truest humility, and with the sincerest honest *Y* of heart. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me. "*

"Cleanse thou me from secret faults. "

"Therefore if a man purge himself from these things [dishonoring to God] he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, fit for the Master's use, prepared for every good work. "

If this is the attitude of our heart toward God, toward this time of the Memorial, happy our lot will be! Further, if we fully comprehend what our Father has done for us through the gift of his dear Son, and with faith and with gratitude live in harmony with his definite promises, how blessed we shall be as we once more partake of the emblems so lovingly introduced and used by our Head and Elder Brother.

"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. "

-A. J. Lodge

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 sepulcher." 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 always, 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."

- *W. Wainwright*

Sixteen Scripture Truths

"The much diversified Wisdom of God, according to a Plan of the Ages, which He formed for the Anointed Jesus our Lord" - Eph. 3:11 (Diaglott)

1. THE CREATION OF MAN

Man is the glory of earthly creation. Notwithstanding his present imperfect and dying condition, and the evil purposes to which all too often he bends his efforts, he stands pre-eminent amongst all created things. The Psalmist says of him, "Thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour, . . . to have dominion over the works of thy hands" -- the earth and all that is on it. How did so wonderful a being come into existence?

There is no reconciliation between the Bible and the theory of evolution, so far as man is concerned. It is reasonable to think that the earth itself did take shape over a long period of time, and that successively higher forms of vegetable and animal life appeared on its surface as time went on. But the theories which profess to explain mankind's descent from the animal creation are altogether wide of the facts, and directly contrary to the philosophy of the Divine Plan. God made man a special creation, having qualities not possessed by any animal and incapable of being derived from any animal.

According to the narrative in Genesis God brought the earth to a point at which it became a suitable home for humanity, and then brought into existence two human beings, male and female, the first human pair. The account says "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." How those two human bodies were fashioned and framed we do not know, and to know is not necessary. What we do know is that at a certain time in history the first man and woman opened their eyes, consciousness dawned upon their minds, and they entered into the experiences of life.

There is nothing unreasonable in the fact of the human race being descended from one pair. Cases have occurred in much more recent history where an island or desert tract has been peopled by the progeny of two people originally cast away there. The marvellous vitality of that first pair, created perfect and without sin, enabled the human race to go on through many generations before the enfeebling effect of sin and its consequences began to shorten human life to the span with which we are familiar today.

The first pair sinned, and death came by sin. It was because one man alone was the progenitor of all men, and all men shared in his condemnation, being yet unborn in him, that Jesus, dying a Ransom for that man, is able to reverse the condemnation, and release all.

Psa. 8:4-7; Heb. 2: 7, 8; Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 2:7; Rom. 5:12.

2. WHAT IS THE SOUL?

God created man by implanting the spirit of life, which only He can give, into a specially prepared human body, "and," says the Genesis account, "man became a living soul." It was the influence of Greek philosophy that persuaded, first the Jews and afterwards the Christians, that the soul is a kind of immortal being which resides in the body and is set free at death, and although this view is still held by many orthodox Christian circles it is quite contrary to Bible teaching. The root idea behind the word "soul" both in Hebrew and Greek languages, is that of a living, breathing creature. When the creature dies there is no longer a "living soul." This does not mean that the individual who dies is dead forever, like the brute beasts that perish. The Bible says that the spirit of man at death returns to the One Who gave it, and that in the Resurrection He will restore that "living soul" to the conscious existence again -- having a new material body, certainly, for the old one will have long since vanished into its constituent atoms -- with the same identity, memory and disposition as before. Jesus said that God is able to destroy the soul as well as the body, and the Scripture confirms this by declaring "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." A soul that can die and be destroyed is clearly not immortal, and in fact many prominent Christian thinkers through the centuries have stated that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has no foundation in the Bible.

The error lies in supposing that the human body is but a temporary abiding place for the real man, who is thought to ascend to his real home in Heaven at death. Contrary to this, the Bible teaching is that man was made for the earth, to inhabit it to eternity under sinless and undying conditions. It is true that there are exceptions to this rule in the case of those who are "spiritually minded in Christ Jesus" and walk in His footsteps, "seeking those things which are above." These will achieve a heavenly and not an earthly salvation. But their entry into Heaven is effected by a change of nature from human to spiritual, and not by the setting free of a "soul."

Hope for a future life therefore rests in God, Who has promised life for all through the resurrection of the dead, a re-creation of identity in a body that is appropriate to the individual's destiny; for the Church, spiritual bodies adapted to the spiritual world, and for men in general, human bodies adapted to this earth.

Gen. 2:7; Job 33:4; Gen. 46:18; Exod. 31:14; Lev. 17:12; Eccl. 12:7; 1 Cor. 15:37-42; Matt. 10:28; James 5:20; Ezek. 18:4; Prov. 6:32; 2 Pet. 3:13; Isa. 65:17-25; Isa. 45:18; John 11:24, 25.

3. THE BIBLE HELL

Although in practice only a few sects now hold to the doctrine of eternal torment, there is still a widespread belief amongst Christians that God does intend to punish sinners everlastingly, and that to all eternity they will remain in a state of conscious misery. Believing that this is the Bible teaching, many hold to this dogma whilst knowing that it is quite irreconcilable with the character of a God of love.

In point of fact, the Bible does not teach that the penalty for sin is eternal conscious misery of any kind. It does teach that the penalty for sin is death and that death is the extinction of life.

"Hell" in the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew word *sheol*, the death state. There are certain symbolic passages where *sheol* is depicted as a state of consciousness, but the metaphorical character of these texts is easily appreciated upon examination. *Sheol*, translated "hell," "grave," and "pit," is in reality the unconscious condition of the dead, knowing nothing and feeling nothing.

New Testament teaching is the same. "Hell" is translated from *hades* and *gehenna*. *Hades* was the death state, and although in New Testament days the infiltration of Greek thought had made general belief in *hades* as a conscious state much more common, its usage in the New Testament, especially as the word for *sheol* in quotations from the Old Testament, show that Jesus and the apostles looked upon it as did their ancestors. "Gehenna" was the name of a valley to the south of Jerusalem where perpetual fires were kept burning to destroy the refuse of the city, and in the New Testament is used to describe that ultimate death, the "Second Death," which overtakes those who refuse to come into harmony with God after all the opportunities of the coming Age, the "Millennial Age," have been offered.

Job prayed to be hidden in *sheol*. David was left in *hades*. Our Lord Himself descended into *hades* and on the third day "rose again from the dead." All such references can only be understood by realising that the Bible Hell is the death state; that when men die they go into the death state, *hades* or *sheol*, awaiting the resurrection, and that when the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is set up and all return from death to be offered the way of everlasting life, the willfully wicked will again go into the death state, *gehenna*, from which there is no resurrection. Thus seen, there is a real penalty for sin, but it is not torment. It is the withdrawal of that life which God gave, but of which the recipient will not make rightful use.

See Jer. 19:5; Rom. 6:23; Prov. 8:36; Ezek. 33:11; Psa. 146:4; Psa. 9:17; Prov. 27:20; Num. 16:33; Gen. 37:35; Eccl. 9:10; Isa. 38:18; Rev. 20:14; Rev. 21:8; Job 14:13; Acts 2:25-34; Isa. 66:14.

4. WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

Death came into the world with sin, and because of sin. When God created man, He told him that obedience to His law would give him everlasting life upon earth, but that disobedience would bring death. Since the Fall, death has come to all human beings without exception, for the entire human race has become involved in the consequences of the entry of sin into the world.

The evil effects of sin will be undone. In the progress of the Divine Plan all the dead are to be raised to conscious life, the "Church" of this Age to a spiritual resurrection with Christ, and mankind generally to human life in the earthly Kingdom of God, there to enjoy full and fair opportunity of accepting the Lord Jesus and attaining human perfection and everlasting life. Where then are the dead in the meantime?

They are not in Heaven, for Jesus declared in His own day that none had as yet ascended into Heaven, and Peter, in his first sermon, said that King David was not ascended into Heaven, but was in the grave, the Bible "Hell." Thus the Bible teaches that death is a sleep, broken by the resurrection, and that in the death state there is "no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave." "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, *in that very day his thoughts perish*" says the Psalmist. The New Testament also refers to death as a sleep, speaking of some who "sleep in Jesus," and that those of the Church who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord will not precede these others who are asleep. It should be clear, therefore, that death is a sleep, and the resurrection is the awakening.

It may seem a hard thing to some that their departed loved ones should be thus unconscious of what is still going on in the world, but let us pause to consider how much of disappointment and concern is saved those loved ones. To be forced to look on at this world and its distresses, and the hardships and sorrows that befall nearly all people, and be impotent to do anything to help, would not be a happy experience for them. How much more loving it is for the Father to "give His beloved sleep" until the day that all shall rise together in the glory of a new Kingdom in which pain, disease and death shall be driven away.

The righteous and the wicked alike "go to one place" says the Scripture, and one day the power of God's Holy Spirit will be exerted to re-create each individual. The sleep of death will be ended.

Gen. 2:16, 17; Isa. 43:27; Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 3:23; Psa. 49:7; John 3:13; Acts 2:34; Eccl. 9:10; Psa. 146:4; 1 Cor. 15:13-20; 1 Thess. 4:14-17; John 2:11-14; Eccl. 3:19, 20; Dan. 12:2; Job 7:21.

5. SATAN

There is a tendency in this modern age to regard belief in the personal Devil as an outworn idea. It is a mistake, and a dangerous mistake. The Apostle Paul said that there do exist evil spiritual intelligences, and if there indeed are such spiritual beings in a state of rebellion against God, there must obviously be one, a leading spirit amongst them, who is directing the assault against holiness and righteousness and at whose door must be laid the ultimate responsibility for the introduction of evil upon earth.

Bible teaching regarding Satan is clear. (The word itself is a Hebrew one meaning "adversary" or "opposing one.") He was originally a sinless, perfect spirit being, among the angels of God, before the earth was. At the time of man's creation it seems he was given some commission in connection with this new creation and was thus brought into contact with man. The Eden story shows that in those days of man's sinless state there was a facility of communication between the human and spiritual worlds which does not now exist in these days of human imperfection. Satan succeeded by means of his deception in enslaving the human race, and has been the acknowledged "God of this world" ever since.

The nature of Satan's sin and his ultimate fate is given in symbolic language in the 14th chapter of Isaiah (Isa. 14) and the 28th chapter of Ezekiel (Eze. 28). Both these passages indicate that he aspired to equality with God. The New Testament is much more explicit concerning the nature and activities of Satan. His aim throughout the ages has been the destruction of the "seed of the woman," the promised means by which the evil that is in the world is to be overthrown and men restored to righteousness and harmony with God. It was thus that he encompassed the death of Jesus Christ. Since then he has been the implacable enemy of the Church, the consecrated followers of Christ in this Age.

Much of the world's trouble must be attributed to the direct influence and intervention of Satan, but despite his apparent liberty to afflict mankind, God is in full control of the situation and has permitted that liberty for a wise purpose. At the commencement of the Messianic Kingdom Satan will be restrained "that he should deceive the nations no more," thus allowing resurrected mankind to progress in the knowledge of God without fear or hindrance, and although it seems that Satan will be loosed for a "little season" at the end of that Age, it will only be for a final test of loyalty upon humanity, and then he himself, unrepentant, will perish forever.

Eph. 6:11, 12; Ezek. 28:13-15; Isa. 14:12-20; Ezek. 28:17-19; Matt. 4:10; Zech. 3:1, 2; Rom. 16:20; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 2:10; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:1, 2, 7-10.

6. ANGELS THAT SINNED

The Book of Genesis tells of a time in world history, just before the Flood, when "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair and took them wives of all which they chose." These sons of God were angelic beings who left their first estate, assumed bodies of flesh, and in rebellion against God attempted by means of human wives to start a new race of beings upon earth. The attempt ended at the Flood and since then these "fallen angels; have been under a Divine restraint that forbids their repeating that course of action.

From the many Biblical allusions to these "evil spirits" it is evident that they have consistently sought to evade the Divine prohibition and to effect some kind of communication with men. For reasons which are still imperfectly understood, it would seem that such attempts must be made under cover of darkness. The history of witchcraft and necromancy in the past, and of modern Spiritualism today, is evidence of the activities of these evil spirits. Since the Scriptures teach that the dead are in a condition of unconsciousness, or sleep, awaiting the resurrection, it is evident that the claims of Spiritualists as to communication with the dead are false or mistaken; in many cases the communications purporting to come from deceased friends and relatives are in reality from these evil spirits.

The Apostle Paul declares that we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual intelligences in the heaven sphere. He knew that there do exist powerful superhuman beings, who seek the corruption and destruction of humanity just as they did in the days before the Flood; but he also knew that such beings can have no power at all against men unless the mind and will be voluntarily submitted to them. This is the safeguard which God has provided. None can come under their power unwillingly.

Jesus had men who had thus become "possessed" by evil spirits, and on more than one occasion the spirits acknowledged His authority. The same thing happened in the days of the apostles, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Of the ultimate fate of these rebellious spirits we know little or nothing save the inescapable fact that since the wages of sin is death, they will, unless they repent, eventually meet that penalty. During the Millennial Age Satan will be bound and evil restrained, and consequently they too will be more completely restrained than is at present the case. But if there is true repentance on their part who can doubt that God will receive them back to Himself as He does all His erring sons who repent?

Gen. 6:1-4; Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4, 5; 1 Pet. 3:19, 20; Lev. 20:6; Deut. 18:10-12; Isa. 8:19, 20; 1 Sam. 28: 3-20; Eph. 6:12; Matt. 9:33, 34; Mark 1:34; Luke 9:1; Luke 10:17; Acts 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 6:3.

7. THE THREE WORLDS

The Divine Plan extends over three periods of time, embracing the whole course of sin and death, from the creation of man to the final attainment of human perfection. Within these three periods the whole of human history and Bible prophecy find their places, and an understanding of them is essential to intelligent cooperation with God.

The first period is called by Peter "the world that was." It extended from Creation to the Flood, and that catastrophe marked the end of the first world. It witnessed God's fair earthly creation marred by the entrance of sin, and the continuing degeneration of the human race, until towards its close it seemed as if all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth. The second world is that called by the Apostle Paul "this present evil world" and extends from the Flood to the Second Advent of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. Evil predominates in this world, and it is as surely doomed as was its predecessor. Human selfishness and violence will destroy this present order and leave the way clear for God to make a fresh start.

This second world is divided by Scripture into three spans of time. The first, from the Flood to the Exodus, was marked by God's dealings with a line of God-faring men, the patriarchs, of whom Abraham is the most prominent. At the Exodus, Abraham's descendants through Isaac were organized into a nation, Israel, and from then to the Crucifixion there endured the second span, in which God dealt with that one nation, training them for their future work as word missionaries in the Kingdom. Then followed a third, from the First Advent to the Second Advent, in which God reaches out to all the nations to take out of them a spiritually minded people to be joined with Christ in the spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God.

This "present evil world" comes to its end in a great time of trouble "such as was not since there was a nation" and in that trouble Jesus Christ returns, takes His power, and the third world commences.

The third world is called by Peter one "wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is the Golden Age of the poets, the time when evil will be restrained, men taught to live righteously, the dead restored, and death be no more. The outcome will be that all who are reclaimed for God will inherit everlasting life on the restored and perfect earth, whilst the incorrigibly wicked will perish everlastingly. So will God's Plan be brought to a triumphant conclusion, and "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord."

Eph. 3:9-11; 2 Pet. 3:6, 7, 13; 2 Pet. 2:5; Gen. 6:7, 8; Gal. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:10; Titus 2:12; Exod. 6:3; Josh. 24:3; Exod. 19:5; Amos 3:2; Isa. 49:6; Acts 15:14-18; 1 Pet. 2:9; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 22, 29, 30; Matt. 19:28; Isa. 25:6-9; Psa. 150:6.

8. THE SON OF GOD

The earthly life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ constitutes the foundation of the Christian faith. He came from above, was born of a virgin, lived as a man, and after His Resurrection returned whence He came. He said of Himself "I and My Father are one"; that this did not forbid distinction of personality is evident from His words on other occasions. He referred to God as His Father and declared Himself to be the Son of God.

John refers to Him as the "Word" Who, from being with the Father, was made flesh and dwelt amongst men. The "Word" (Greek *Logos*) had been with the Father from before the beginning of creation, the Father's agent in all that was subsequently made. He laid aside that glory which He had with the Father "before the world was" and became man-perfect and sinless but nevertheless man -"for the suffering of death." Thus He became "God manifest in the flesh," and the only manner in which God, invisible to human sight, could be discerned by the natural senses. This was how Jesus could say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Having thus taken hold of human nature, Jesus fulfilled His purpose in coming to earth, that of dying for man's salvation. The Apostle Paul says "the man Christ Jesus . . . gave himself a ransom (*antilutron* - *corresponding* price) for all." The precise manner in which the death of Jesus constituted man's ransom has been the subject of theological debates for centuries, but the Scriptures should be sufficient when they say "As *by man* came death, so *by man* came also the resurrection of the dead" "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." It was Adam who sinned, and the human race was condemned in him. It was Christ Who gave His humanity a corresponding price for Adam, and the human race are delivered in Him.

He lay in the grave for three days and on the third day God raised Him from the dead, not in the form of man, for His humanity had been given on the cross, a ransom, but to the glory of spiritual being which He had possessed before coming to earth. He appeared a few times to His disciples, under different forms, such as that of a gardener to Mary, but after the fortieth day He appeared no more. He was set down at the Father's right hand, from whence He comes, at His Second Advent, not as man, but in the spiritual glory of His Divinity, to establish His Kingdom upon earth.

1 Cor. 3:11; John 16:28; Luke 1:34, 35; I Tim. 2:5; John 10:30; John 1:14; Prov. 8:22-31; John 17:5; Heb. 2:9; I Tim. 3:16; John 14:9; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 10:12, 13; Heb. 9:28.

9. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the medium through which God makes contact with His creation. From Genesis, where "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" to Revelation, in which "the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'" the pages of the Bible tell how God's Holy Spirit is ceaselessly active in the world, steadily working to effect the full accomplishment of the Divine Plan.

There are many instances in the Old Testament where the Spirit of the Lord is said to have come upon men of God to inspire them to great things. The Spirit came upon Gideon, for example, and he delivered Israel. Moses prayed that the Lord would put His Spirit on all His people, that they might be prophets. We have New Testament warranty for the fact that the prophets of old were "moved by the Holy Spirit" to speak and write the visions they saw, foreviews of events yet to come, revealed for the guidance of believers through the ages.

The office of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is of even deeper significance. Jesus Promised His disciples that after His departure He would send them another means of guidance, and His promise was fulfilled at Pentecost in the coming of the Holy Spirit, a Divine power and influence resting upon each one and enabling them to do things that in their own unaided strength they could not have done. Every believer who now comes "into Christ" by consecration of life to Him is "begotten of the Spirit" to a new life, and thenceforth is under a transforming influence which opens his eyes to spiritual things and ultimately makes him ready for the spiritual salvation which is the hope of the Church.

The old expression "Holy Ghost" is out of date today. When the Bible was translated into English the word "Ghost" had the sense of a spiritual power or influence, but today has the thought of personality been added. The words '*pneuma*' in Greek and "*ruach*" in Hebrew, which are used for the Holy Spirit of God, are both the equivalent of the Latin "*spiritus*" meaning breath, breath of life, soul, mind, and in recognition of this fact the term "Holy Spirit" is used today more and more in preference to "Holy Ghost."

The Holy Spirit must not be thought of then as a third "God" or as distinct from the Father, having a personality of its own. It is the influence and power of God in active operation that is called the Holy Spirit, and it is this power that creates and sustains all things and is effective in the individual life.

Gen. 1:2; Rev. 22:17; Isa. 55:11; Jud 6:34; Num. 11:29; 2 Pet. 1:21; John 14:15-18; Acts 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:3.

10. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

Old ideas die hard, and the popular belief that the Day of Judgment is a period of twenty four hours, at the dawn of which Christ will suddenly appear in the air, the "Last Trump" will sound, mountains and rocks quake and rend, the graves open and the dead stand before the Throne, sinners be condemned to everlasting torment and the few righteous taken to heavenly bliss, lingers still among Christians although not many talk about it. That grim picture is a survival of the Dark Ages and has no foundation in the Bible. According to the Scriptures the Day of judgment is a long period of time during which all humanity will be placed on trial for life, with every incentive offered them to renounce sin and become reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time of joy and gladness, not one of fear and terror.

The Day of judgment commences at the close of this present Age in which the "kingdoms of this world" hold sway. With the passing of these kingdoms in a "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" there occurs the Second Advent of Christ in the glory of His Messianic Kingdom, His saints, the faithful Christian disciples of this present Age, being with Him in glory. This is the first event of that Day. Next in order is a proclamation to all the world, requiring obedience to the laws of the Kingdom, for "nothing shall hurt or destroy" and the power to inflict evil upon others will be taken from men. Then comes the Resurrection, during which "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." The glorified Church will be active among the people, turning men and women to righteousness, and as the "Day of judgment proceeds, so humanity will line up on one side or the other, for Christ and His righteousness, or for the Devil and sin. In the meantime the earth itself will be made fruitful and productive, the desert blossoming as the rose, a fitting home for the sinless beings that are to inhabit it to all eternity.

At the end comes the test, a "little season" during which those who are incorrigibly set for sin will be manifested in their true colors and will die in their sin. That closes the Day of Judgment, for all sin and all sinners will have perished from the earth, and all men everywhere will be fully in harmony with the laws of righteousness.

Acts 17:31; 2 Pet. 3:7, 8; I Cor. 15:25-28; Matt. 24:21, 22; Dan. 12:1-3; Dan. 7:1-28; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 1 John 3:2; Matt. 13:43; Rev. 19:11-14; Jude 14-15; Micah 4:2; Isa. 11:9; Isa. 32:17, 18; Rev. 20: 1-3; John 5:28, 29; Matt. 25:31-46; Isa. 35:1-6; Isa. 55:9-13; Rev. 20:7-10; Ezek. 18:4; Matt. 11:23, 24; Psa. 98:9; 1 Chron. 16:31-34; Rev. 21:7, 8; Acts. 3:23.

11. THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

There are two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly. Although God's provision for the main body of mankind is everlasting life upon earth, His purpose with Christian believers of this Age is for a heavenly salvation in association with the Lord Jesus Christ. Christendom in general has lost sight of this dual aspect of the Divine Plan, but it is plainly shown in the Bible. When the Apostles held their first great conference, recorded in Acts 15, they agreed upon their understanding that during this Age, between the First and Second Advents, God is "visiting" the nations to take out of them "a people for His Name." This people is the body of devoted and consecrated believers in Christ, men and women who have come to Him by means of repentance, conversion, justification by faith, and complete dedication of life. These constitute the "Church," the "Body" or "Bride" of Christ, to use New Testament terms, and after a lifetime spent in faithful service for their Lord, they are exalted to be with Him in spiritual glory.

The present hope of the Church is for the return of the Lord and the setting up of His Kingdom upon earth. The Christian commission in the meantime is to seek out those who will give themselves to God in consecration of life and thus become fellow disciples, to manifest the spirit and teaching of Christ in daily life, to follow His example in doing good to all men wherever opportunity offers, to announce the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom, and to call men to repentance and reconciliation with God.

The future work of the Church is with her Lord for the conversion of the world during the Millennial Age. The training for that work will have been acquired during this present Age, and after the Lord's return at His Second Advent and the change of His faithful followers to spiritual conditions this work will proceed in power. The experiences of this present life, under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, will have made such disciples fitly qualified to administer the earthly Kingdom of God.

With the close of the Millennium the work of the Lord and His Church with the earth will be complete, for mankind will have attained perfection, sin will be no more, the willfully wicked will have perished, and humanity will remain righteous for ever. Beyond that time the Scripture is measurably silent, but it does hint at further activities for the Church in as yet unrevealed spheres, continuing to the glory of God throughout eternity.

1 Cor. 15:41-53; Heb. 3:1; Rom. 8:14; Acts 15:13-17; Matt. 3:2; Acts 3:19; Luke 15:7; Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:26; Rom. 5:1; 2 Cor. 6:1; 1 Thess. 4:3; Rom. 12:1; Rom. 6:3-5; Luke 12:36-39; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 4:8; Matt. 24:14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20:4; Gal. 3:27-29; 1 Cor. 15:24, 25; Matt. 25:33, 34; Rev. 22:1-6.

12. TIMES OF THE GENTILES

The "Times of the Gentiles" was the name given by Jesus to that period during which Israel was to be subject to the other nations of the world. From the time of Israel's organization into a nation at the Exodus until its final captivities under Sennacherib of Assyria and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the 7th century B.C., it specially represented God in the world. Its national polity was a theocracy, i.e., God Himself was King and the ruling monarch was said to "sit upon the throne of the Lord." In this the nation pictured the rule of the future Millennial Age, when Christ reigns over the earth. This order of things came to an end with Zedekiah, the last Jewish king, and of him it was said "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it him." True to these words, the nation was scattered and has never regained control of its own land.

From that time to the present, a period of twenty-five hundred years, Gentile nations have held sway over Jerusalem. Babylon first, then Persia, Greece and finally Rome held the country in their grasp. These four powers were seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, in which the gold head, silver arms, copper lower parts and iron legs symbolized these four empires. Likewise the four wild beasts of Daniel's dream pictured these same four powers. In these symbolic prophecies this Gentile rule is seen to come to its end at the coming of the Kingdom of God, in which the Son of Man, Christ, takes the power and the kingdom and reigns for ever and ever.

The time for that change has come. The great powers of earth have had their day and opportunity, and whilst some have endeavored to rule justly and wisely, and have brought the blessings of ordered government to their subjects, none have been able to abolish the great curses of humanity, sin, disease and death, nor can they. Only Christ's Kingdom can do that. Now the present world distress, the failure of statesmen to achieve world peace, the mutual jealousy of great Powers, the general perplexity of nations, are all signs that we live in the day when the "Times of the Gentiles" have come to their end. Jerusalem is to be set free, the age-long oppression of God's ancient people lifted, and the Kingdom of God, with all that it holds of life and blessing for every man, be ushered in.

Luke 21:24; Rev. 11:1, 2; Ezek. 21:27; Rom. 11:1-36; Dan. 2:31-45; Dan. 7:1-27; Isa. 60:1-22.

13. TIMES OF RESTITUTION

"Times of restitution" was the expression used by the Apostle Peter in his first sermon, preached at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, to describe the coming Age during which Jesus Christ will reign in righteousness over the earth. Peter called it by that name because during that Age all that has been lost to man in consequence of the fall into sin will be restored, with the added benefit of a knowledge of the effects of sin that will guarantee against repetition of that fall. Jesus called it the "re-generation" because during this period the dead are to be restored to earth, and together with the living are to enjoy a full, fair opportunity to accept Him as their Saviour, and progress to human perfection, mental, moral and physical, in the power of that acceptance. The teachings of Jesus regarding the "Kingdom of Heaven" have reference, not only to the heavenly spiritual phase of that Kingdom, the ultimate portion of consecrated Christians, but also to this earthly Kingdom in which all evil and sin will be gradually eliminated from the hearts and lives of men, so that at the end only the willfully sinful will be demonstrated unworthy of life, and will suffer sin's penalty, death. It is this Kingdom of God upon earth to which the ancient prophets of Israel turned their thoughts when they spoke of the time when swords would be turned into ploughshares and nations go to war no more; when men would sit in safety beneath their own vine and fig tree in peace and security; when the lion would lie down with the lamb, and all creation be at peace. It was this same period that John the Revelator saw in vision when he beheld the triumphant Church of Christ reigning with Him over the nations "a thousand years" -- from which fact comes the name "Millennium," often applied to that Age -- and the New Jerusalem established upon earth, with its River of Life and Trees of Life for the healing of the nations.

Sin, disease, pain, death; all are to pass away when the Times of Restitution commence, and God's Will is done on earth as in Heaven, in fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus. All people then living, as well as those now dead, will share in that Kingdom, and have opportunity to come into harmony with God's Will for mankind.

This, man's hope, will soon be realized; for the signs of the times indicate that the dawn of the "Times of Restitution" is at hand.

Acts 3:19-21; Gen. 22:18; Isa. 35:8-10; Luke 2:10; Rev. 20:1-3; Jer. 31:33, 34; Num. 14:21; Zeph. 3:9; Psa. 30:5; Mal. 4:2; Acts 17: 31; Matt. 19:28; John 5:28, 29; Jer. 31:29, 30; Acts 3:23; Isa. 2:2-4; Isa. 66:21-25; Rev. 21:1-4.

14. THE SECOND ADVENT

The Second Advent of Christ is for the completion of the work of His First Advent. He came then, to seek and to save that which was lost -fallen man, in bondage to sin and estranged from God. He died on the Cross, a Ransom for all, and by that death secured the power to recall every member of the human race from the death state, into which they ass of necessity in consequence of sin. The task of awakening those dead ones and bringing them back to perfection and everlasting life is reserved for His Second Advent.

When Jesus left His disciples He promised them that He would come again. On the Mount of Olives He had a long conversation with them in which He outlined the signs which would indicate the time of His return, and He exhorted them, and those that should follow after them, to be ever watchful and expectant. Throughout all ages since then there have always been the watchers, waiting and longing for His coming.

Although Jesus promised that He would be with His disciples in spirit throughout the Age ("Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world") it is clear that when He spoke of His return He referred to a personal coming, a departure from the Heavenly courts and the presence of His Father, and coming to this world which was the scene of His earthly life. It is equally clear that He does not return in the flesh, as a man, in the fashion of His First Advent, for He is a man no longer. He returns a spiritual being, the "express image of the Father's person," and hence at His return is normally invisible to human sight.

At His return He sets up His Kingdom on earth and assumes control of earth's affairs, having associated with Him the members of His Church, His devoted followers of this Age. His ruling power will be exercised through faithful men of God of old, the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets, raised from the dead to be guides and counselors to humanity. During the whole period of Christ's reign over the earth evil will be restrained, death, except as the penalty for willful sin, will cease, and men be encouraged to come to Jesus in full repentance and conversion, so receiving everlasting life.

Those signs which Jesus described are being seen today. A widespread conviction exists among many Christian believers that we are living in the time of which Jesus spoke and that His revelation to men is an imminent event. The present distress of nations is a herald of the Second Advent.

Luke 10:10; Mark 10:45; John 10:15; Rom. 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:23; Matt. 24:1-25; Matt. 28:20; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 1:3; 1 John 3:1-3; John 14:3; Luke 12:36-39; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Cor. 15:25, 26; Luke 13:28; Luke 21:25, 26.

15. ARMAGEDDON

Armageddon is the name given, in the Book of Revelation, to that last great conflict in which the forces of evil in the world muster themselves to withstand the incoming Kingdom of God upon earth. They fail, and with their failure the present Age ends and the "Times of Restitution" begin. The name itself is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Harmegiddon*, mountain of Megiddo, referring to the district of that name in Galilee where most of the historic battles of Israel were fought.

It is to be expected that many forces will combine to oppose the establishment of the Kingdom of God. A world order which is going to suppress all forms of oppression and injustice, command wars to cease, restrain men from inflicting evil upon their fellows, establish righteousness and just dealing as the order of the day, is bound to have its enemies. Although there is no doubt that the majority of mankind will accept the new Kingdom with enthusiasm -- for the majority are righteously and peaceably disposed -- there will be grim opposition on the part of those whose selfish interests are threatened by the change of sovereignty.

We are already experiencing the preliminary stages of Armageddon in prevalent world distress. Since that memorable year *1914* the nations have been angry, and never free from war. A growing disregard of God is being reflected in an impatience of the restraints demanded by the moral laws which God has ordained, and on every hand now the cry is that man, with the aid of science, can work out his own salvation without Divine help. In consequence any suggestion that the kingdoms of this world are to pass away and give place to the Kingdom of our Lord provokes increasing resentment.

The principal impact of that resentment will come against the nation of Israel, regathered to its own land in fulfillment of Divine promise and prospering there whilst the rest of the world is floundering more and more helplessly in troubles of its own making. It is at about this time that the future princes of Israel, the ancient stalwarts of Old Testament history, will be raised from the dead to guide the destinies of Israel, and it will be against them, as representing the incoming Kingdom, that the evil forces of this world will advance. In this time of crisis God will intervene and make of no avail the weapons in which the forces of evil have trusted, and in their crushing defeat the nations will see the hand of God and be ready to pay attention to the proclamation of the new Kingdom.

Rev. 16:16; Rev. 19:19-21; Acts 3:19-23; 2 Pet. 3:13; Psa. 24:3, 4; Isa. 2:3; Isa. 25:9; Rev. 11:18; 2 Tim. 3:5; 1 Thess. 5:1-4; Rev. 11:15; Ezek. 38:8-23; Zech. 12:3-6; Zech. 14:1-9.

16. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Fourteen centuries before Christ the people of Israel were constituted a missionary nation to manifest the standards and laws of God to the world. The fact that because of unbelief and hardness of heart they have so far failed to appreciate their calling does not alter the fact that God sees in them certain qualities which fit them peculiarly for this task. The covenant into which Moses, on their behalf, entered with God at Mount Sinai, provided for material prosperity upon the national observance of Divine law, and adversity upon rejection of that law. The subsequent history of Israel tells of alternate well being and disaster as they served God or departed from Him culminating in the terrible series of dispersions which started with the fall of Samaria in the 7th B.C. century and ended with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, since when Israel has been a people scattered amongst the nations.

The Scripture says, however, that "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew." The Bible promises that at the end of this world and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom God will regather Israel to its own land, that the nation thus re-constituted might become the nucleus of the Kingdom of God upon earth, a people to whom the new "princes in all the earth," the resurrected patriarchs and prophets of old, shall come and assume control. The commencement of this gathering, now in progress, is a sign of the nearness of that Kingdom.

The nation thus gathered will be subjected to a crucial test, for the jealousy of evil forces in the world ("Gog and Magog") will be aroused at the spectacle of a prosperous people occupying the Holy Land, and there will be a determined attempt to wreck their growing nationhood. This onslaught will be the signal for God Himself to intervene, and that intervention will be the first worldwide outward sign that a new power, not of this world, has taken a hand in human affairs. The scattering of those evil forces will be coincident with the revelation of Jesus Christ and His assumption of power as King; and this will commence the Messianic Kingdom.

Thus will be brought to an end the twenty-six-centuries-old division between the "Two Tribes" and the "Ten Tribes." Israel will be one nation, firmly welded together as a people set to execute God's purpose. Under their leaders they will constitute a "servant nation" in the sense that Isaiah prophesied of them, to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Exod. 24:1-8; Heb. 3:7-11, 15:19; Rom. 11:1-26; Isa. 40:1-5; Isa. 58:12; Isa. 1:26; Dan. 12:1-3; Isa. 49:6.

- *F. Musk*

A Legend of Service

"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. "- Isaiah 6:8

It pleased the Lord of Angels (praise his name!),
To hear one day, report from those who came
With pitying sorrow, or exultant joy,
To tell of earthly tasks in his employ;
For some were sorry when they saw how slow
The streams of heavenly love on earth did flow;
And some were glad because their eyes had seen
Along its banks, fresh flowers and living green.
So, at a certain hour before the throne
The youngest angel, Asmiel, stood alone;
Nor glad, nor sad, but full of earnest thought,
And thus his tidings to the Master brought:
"Lord, in the City Lupon I have found
Three servants of Thy holy name renowned
Above their fellows: one is very wise,
With thoughts that ever range above the skies;
And one is gifted with the golden speech
That makes men glad to hear when he will teach;
And one, with no rare gift or grace endued,
Has won the people's love by doing good.
With three such saints Lupon is trebly blessed;

But, Lord, I fain would know which loves thee best."
Then spake the Lord of Angels, to whose look
The hearts of all are like an open book;
"In every soul, the secret thought I read,
And well I know who loves me best indeed,
But every life has pages vacant still
Whereon a man may write the thing he will;
Therefore, I read in silence day by day
And wait for hearts untaught to learn my way.
But thou shalt go to Lupon, to the three
Who serve me there, and take this word from me:
Tell each of them his Master bids him go
Alone to Spiran's huts across the snow;
There he shall find a certain task for me,
But what, I do not tell to them nor thee,
Give thou the message, make my word the test,
And crown for me the one who answers best."

Silent the angel stood with folded hands
To take the imprint of his Lord's commands;
Then drew one breath, obedient and elate,
And passed the selfsame hour through Lupon's gate.
First to the temple door he made his way,
And there, because it was a holy day,
He saw the folk by thousands thronging, stirred
By ardent thirst, to hear the preacher's word.
Then, while the echoes murmured Bernol's name,
Through aisles that hushed behind him, Bernol came;
Strung to the keenest pitch of conscious might,
With lips prepared and firm, and eyes alight,
One moment at the pulpit's steps he knelt
In silent prayer and on his shoulder felt
The angel's hand: "The Master bids thee go
Alone to Spiran's huts across the snow,
To serve him there." Then Bernol's hidden face
Went white as death, and for about the space
Of ten slow heartbeats there was no reply
Til Bernol looked around and whispered, "*Why?*"
But answer to his question came there none.
The angel sighed, and with a sigh was gone.

Within the humble home, where Malvin spent
His studious years, on holy things intent,
Sweet stillness reigned, and there the angel found
The saintly sage immersed in thought profound,
Weaving with patient toil and willing care
A web of wisdom, wonderful and fair;
A beauteous robe for truth's fair bridal meet,
And needing but one thread to be complete.
Then Asmiel touched his hand and broke the thread
Of finespun thought, and very gently said,
'The One of whom thou thinkest bids thee go
Alone to Spiran's huts, across the snow,
To serve him there." with sorrow and surprise
Malvin looked up, reluctance in his eyes.
The broken thread, the strangeness of the call,
The perilous passage through the mountain wall,
The solitary journey and the length
Of way unknown, too great for his frail strength,
Appalled him; with doubtful brow
He scanned the doubtful task, and muttered, "*How?*"
But Asmiel answered, as he turned to go,
With cold disheartened voice, "I do not know."

Now as he went, with fading hope, to seek
The third and last to whom God bade him speak,
Scarce twenty steps away whom should he meet
But Fermor, hurrying cheerfully down the street,
With ready step that faced his work like play,
And joyed to find it greater every day;
Then Asmiel stopped him with uplifted hand,
And gave without delay, his Lord's command:
"Him whom thou servest here, would have thee go
Alone to Spiran's huts across the snow
To serve him there." Ere Asmiel breathed again,
The eager answer leaped to meet him, "*When?*"
The angel's face with inward joy grew bright,
And all his figure glowed with heavenly light;
He took the golden circlet from his brow
And gave the crown to Fermor, answering,
"Now, For thou has met the Master's hidden test,
And I have found the man who loves him best.
Not thine, nor mine, to question or reply
When he commands, answering, how? or why?
He knows the cause; his ways are wise and just;
Who serves the King must serve with perfect trust!"

Entered Into Rest

Mortis Blomberg, Bay Harbor Is., Fla.
Gordon F. Bristol, Seattle, Wash.
Eva Firestone, Upton, Wyo.
Hazel B. Hamilton, Hobart, Ind.
Daniel H. LePitre, Chicago, Ill.
George C. Pierson, Buffalo, Ill.
Wilma C. Rager, E. Liverpool, Ohio
Stefan Urbaniak, Cicero, Ill.

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, 1984, 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 1984-85.

The brethren whose terms of service will expire are: J. L. Buss, A. Gonczewski, H. C. Hoglebe, L. Petran, W. J. Siekman, E. R. Villman, 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, 1984*, such names will be published in the May June issue of the *Herald*, that all members may have an opportunity of voting for them.