

“I Will Turn My hand Unto The Little Ones”

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We have learned by our close study of the scriptures that the New Creation is God's special care. While much of God's great creations--like the suns, planets, oceans and others--have established laws to govern and direct their movements, the New Creation, although having fixed and established laws, requires by God's own choice, a daily watchcare. No doubt our Lord as our Elder Brother and our Master keeps the personal supervision for His Father. We are glad that this is so.

Our lesson study before us is intended to deepen our faith and our confidence, if need be, in the Divine direction of the True Church through the passing years. Too, our lesson will permit our consecrated minds to relax with the assurance that God is able--and abundantly able--to fulfill all His promises toward us. Too, our lesson will reassure us that all the events and experiences that occur within the circles of the Church during her days of development are according to clearly stated promises for our day at the closing hours of the Harvest.

Our topic, "I Will Turn My Hand Unto the Little Ones," is a portion of a prophecy concerning our Lord and a portion of His Church. This prophecy we will come to a little later in the lesson, As we think for a few moments upon the words of the topic we find a sweet, quiet faith come from the words. If we believe that through Christ we may be counted as one of the Lord's little ones, then the consideration that His hand will turn favorably to us can only bring trust. This thought may direct our minds to the words of Isaiah 40:11, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd: He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." The few texts which precede this account declare the reason why God a hand is over His little ones. Using Rotherham translation we read, "To a high mountain get ye up, O heraldband of Zion. Lift high with strength your voice, O heraldband of Jerusalem--Lift it high do not fear, say to the cities of Judah, Lo! your God! Lo, My Lord Yahweh as a mighty one doth come and his own arm is about to rule for him,--Lo! his recompense before him."

Since God never sleeps, never is off duty, whose arm is never short, and whose eye is never dim, neither is He dull of hearing, it is of much comfort to know we can be counted as sheep or lambs of His Son's flock. It is for this reason our Lord has reminded us that His love and care for the sheep of His flock is a continuing matter. In John 13:1 we read in part, ". . . having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." This account we will recall was stated in the upper room to His twelve brethren, Judas had not yet left for his work of betrayal. Then the last verse of Matt. 28 we find a statement by

the risen Master to a gathering--perhaps to the 500--". . . and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Rotherham states, ". . . And lo, I am with you, all the days, until the conclusion of the age."

God has recorded for us many instances in which His hand has been over faithful saints. The saints or holy ones prior to the Gospel Age privileges. In Gen. 8:1-22 we find evidences that God's hand was over Noah. In verse 6 we read, "And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the Ark which he had made." Through the window "which he had made" came back assurance that God was with Noah by the return of the second bird, the dove, "and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off." Unless God's spirit moved the little mind of the dove to bring back the leaf, and unless God's spirit moved the mind of Noah to "make the window" we would have been without a remarkable story of both faith and God's supervision--and then after forty days. We could recall the story of Gen. 22:13, how the faith of Abraham questioned not God's will to slay Isaac and when the full manifestation of his faith was demonstrated with the raised knife to slay his son, God turned His hand toward Abraham and provided a ram caught by his horns.

Then again, we find a most remarkable story that can only picture the Church in the account of Elijah in 1 Kings 18:30-46. For our purpose we note how God showed His Hand to Elijah while on the top of Mount Carmel. Elijah by faith told King Ahab to flee down the mountain so he would not be trapped by the soon coming rain. With head bowed in prayer, his face between his knees, he told his servant to go and look toward the sea. This the servant did and reported nothing. Then at the time of the seventh scanning of the skies he reported a little cloud about the size of a man's hand. This was more than sufficient evidence for a positive declaration that the time had come for the rain. This little cloud was surely to Elijah the hand of God. Could it be that the Lord is giving to us a hidden lesson? That at the time of 1874 or the beginning of the seventh thousand year day, the returned Lord showed His Hand in the affairs of the earth by a very small sign of His reign (rain)? The small sign was sufficient for both typical Elijah and for Bro. Russell to do something as a result of the "small cloud.

But our lesson is drawn from the pattern of events that mark the close of the Master's earthly pilgrimage. Our Lord knew that His departure would both sadly and strangely affect His disciples. Knowing the human frame of His brethren our Lord could foresee the stress, worry, vexation and dismay that soon each of His brethren would encounter. Therefore he prepared them for the event by words of special comfort. In addition to the two previously quoted texts that indicated His continuing love for them and for all the Church he stated in John 14:1 that their hearts need not be troubled.

In the account recorded in Matt. 21 we find our Lord requesting two of His disciples to bring to Him an ass and a colt from a previously arranged location. Riding on one He made His descent into Jerusalem and was soon heralded as King. The event of the fulfillment of Zech. 9:9-12 in measure at that time has been a rich blessing to each of the brethren down through the years. Too, it has provided greater meaning to us living since 1874 when our King has returned and has begun the process of setting up His Kingdom. The day following this event our Lord visited the Temple and pronounced His displeasure and upset the moneychangers and sellers of doves. Then His walk took Him by a fig tree barren of any fruit. This provided the basis for the lesson that neither had natural Israel brought forth any fruit and in symbol with the fig tree He told them of the 1845 years of added barrenness which ended in the year 1878. Then our Lord came to Bethany and in the home of Mary and Martha with Lazarus was anointed by Mary. He declared this she did for His burial.

Next we find our lesson in the upper room. The Passover was concluded and the Master gave the lesson of the feet washing to remind us that we need one another. Then the Master, and now with only His eleven, took the bread to symbolize his perfect unleavened life to be soon broken for them and to give them life or justification by the power of imputation. Then the cup and its contents to symbolize their participation with Him in joint partnership of suffering unto death. Then they sang a song and according to Matt. 26:30, 31, they went out into the Mount of Olives. It is not difficult to feel the sadness in the voice of the Lord, as He looked at each of His brethren that had been close companions with Him for 3½ years. They saw Him heal, open blind eyes, raise the dead, speak to thousands of Israel, question the priests, and broke bread with Him day after day. We can almost see our Lord raise His head from a lowered position and say to them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Then our Master prayed for strength.

After His season of prayer in the garden, Judas entered with the multitude. Soon the mock trial was over, our Lord had been beaten and spat upon. Then we follow the Master to the hill of Golgotha. We can hear the hammer blows as the nails fasten Him to the cross. The cross is raised, He thirsts. The multitude below requests His proof of being a King or the Son of God. He looks toward His mother and to John. Remembering "having loved His own He loved them unto the end," He looks to His mother Mary and states, "Woman (affectionate term), behold thy son. Then He saith to John, Behold thy Mother." Was not this an evidence that the care of the Church and those close to Him were never without His watchful supervision?

From the scriptures noted, special attention seems to be given to the end of the age. Therefore our Lord was careful to assure us that this is exactly correct as the prophecy of Zech. 13:7, which our Lord referred to in stating to the disciples that "the shepherd was to be smitten and the sheep scattered" was only quoted in part. The unquoted portion would have fulfillment at a later time. Let us now turn to the text from which our lesson is drawn. It reads, "Awake, O sword against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."

How did our Lord fulfill this? You will recall he did not forget His mother--even with a body in pain and a mind concerned as to whether He had been fully pleasing to His Father. Then His death, God directed positive indications by the darkening of the sun, the earthquake and the rent temple veil that He was the Son of God and had been faithful. This could have been much comfort to His disciples if they by confident faith had read the signs. Just like today--the evidences abound that we are some years into the new day and our King is making manifest the beginnings of His reign. But not all today read the signs as neither did they at the first advent.

On the third day our risen Lord began to turn His hand to the little ones. First to Mary Magdalene out of whom He had cast seven devils. (Mark 16:9) Then one by one and group by group He appeared to others. The Master was careful for Peter--since He knew Peter would be in great mental pain and sorrow by saying, "Go tell Peter." As longing must have been the heart of the Master to once again see the face of His Father and to behold His actual presence--His love and care was still with His little ones--they need Him--and He comforted them.

But what is the scriptural definition of a little one as used in our text? Our Lord during His ministry frequently used the expression of little or little one. In Matt. 10:42 we read, "And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." Then again in Matt. 18, verses 1 to 7, 10 and 14. The last verse states, "So it is not the will of my Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish ."

We each must recognize that the Heavenly Father is also interested in these little ones and they are also the charge of the Father. This can only be comforting to us who claim this wonderful relationship. For our text in Zech. 13:7 being directed by God to the prophet used the term "little one" in just a bit different manner than did our Lord. The Hebrew word meaning of little one in the text is "to be small--a condition attained and not a natural disposition." Thus the little ones, under the Hand of God or of our Lord, are brethren of

the Master that have grown to be small, teachable, attentive, submissive, trustful, patient in faith, willing to be directed.

In forming another setting for our lesson, God directed the mind of Zechariah to write another prophecy for our day. In chapter 4, verses 1 through 10 we have a picture of the Gospel Age Church. In these texts, we see the Church as the Candlestick of Gold with the seven stages of its development suggested by the seven lamps. Each lamp with a bowl of olive oil--or direction of the Holy Spirit of God and supplied with oil from two Olive trees. The old and new testament no doubt is here represented as the source of guidance for the True Church, all through the Gospel Age. Then in verse 5, the angel spoke to the prophet and asked if he had an answer to the meaning of this picture. Zechariah replied, "Not" Then we read, "Then he (angel) answered and spake unto me saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts, Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house: His hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto you."

In this beautiful lesson picture we see our Lord as the great builder who laid the foundation of the Church at Pentecost. Then during the dark ages for some 1,000 years or more, great mountains of persecutions, false teachings and practices, made difficult the walk of the Lord's little ones--but as verse 7 states--the mountain of trials became like a plain or leveled out by faith. Then in verse 9 we have the complete confidence that the same builder and architect who laid the foundation will also with His own hands complete the Temple, the Church. Since we have the same builder--we may have confidence that He is using the same set of blueprints--the Divine Plan of the Ages--that were necessary when laying the foundation. Then in verse 10 we find a remarkable prophetic statement that brings the lesson to our day. We read in this verse, "For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth!" In these verses our lesson begins at Pentecost with the laying of the foundation. Then in the day of small things we find the same builder now using a plummet. A plummet is not needed when laying a foundation, but only when the actual walls of the building are erected. Thus our Heavenly Father is tolling us that at the time of Zerubbabel's return in 1874, when His own hands shall finish the Temple, the actual erection is under way with the raising of the sleeping saints. Why a day of small things? Fulfillments so small--yet highly significant--that only a few of the earth, by the eye of faith and vision may see the events in fulfillment. The Lord's return, the time of the Harvest, beginning of earth's

jubilee, the process of restraining Satan's power, early work of restitution, raising of the sleeping saints, God's hand over natural Israel, early signs in the nations that God's reign has begun through His Son, and the early dawn of the Millennium. These momentous events are so small that all of Christendom cannot see them, none of the world, but only a few with the special eye salve of Rev. 3:18 which the Lord provided for the last or seventh Church.

When our Lord or Zerubbabab moved into action to finish the Temple, He began with the cry of Psalm 50:5, "Gather my saints unto me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." And as the prophecy states, His eyes went back and forth through the earth looking for His faithful footstep followers. Then the prophecy is clear to state that He had seven eyes--full of wisdom to accomplish this work.

Our Lord with very special emphasis desired to declare to His little ones at the time of the end of the world or age that they were not forgotten and that they would receive His direct consideration. Turn to Luke 12, beginning at verse 22 and on to verse 37, we find the following indications of His continuing care--even unto the end. In verse 22 He states, "Take no thought," then following texts we find these expressions--"Consider the ravens," "Consider the lilies," "And seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink," "Fear not," "Seek ye the Kingdom." It is evident that the Master is preparing the Church to have confidence that He will continue to "Turn His hand unto the Little Ones" even to the very end. Then in verse 37 we find our returned Master girding Himself to feed the Church. The manner by which our Master would do this was by using a physical tool or servant. The disciples that heard our Lord make this prophetic statement wondered who was that servant that would be found among other servants at the time of His return. Our Lord replied, not to the question of Peter, but gave another prophecy, declaring, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom His Lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season." This, we will recall, finds a parallel scripture in Rev. 3:20. In this text our Lord announces His return by knocking at the Harvest Period Door and fixing the condition of sharing His presence by hearing His voice. The full Harvest Message of Truth has been the Master's voice. Then our Lord adds that having both heard the knock--the agency the Lord used to announce the Harvest Message and time of the Lord's return--and hearkening to the Lord's voice--our Master would abide in close companionship and would provide the food--or meat in due season. Thus in no direct manner should we accredit the Harvest Message to Bro. Russell--but it is the voice of the Lord. This fact, if properly seen should emphasize the importance of what we find in the writings of the Seventh Messenger.

Now to move our lesson into the mere meaningful fulfillment of Zech. 13:7, let us go back in our minds to the upper room with our Master. In John 13:2 we find that at the conclusion of the Passover Supper, according to the law, our Lord having fulfilled the complete type He desired to give another lasting lesson to His brethren. He did this by washing their feet and stated, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet." Then in verse 20, out of context with the event of feet washing, our Master made this peculiar statement. Peculiar from the viewpoint that it did not seem to fit the occasion of the upper room or that which immediately followed. The text reads, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

We believe our Master was looking down the corridor of time and was projecting His care over the church. The text could not refer to the Holy Spirit which was promised to be sent after His death as the Holy Spirit is from the Father and not from our Lord. This text seems to tell us that our Lord was to be responsible for sending the seven messengers to the Church. This is indicated by Rev. 1:20. Here we find each of the seven messengers held in the right hand of the Lord. Thus receiving that which was close to the heart of the Lord was the same as receiving the Lord--and, as our Lord stated, also receiving the Father. When we view matters from this clearly suggested scriptural concept we cannot but place proper recognition upon the ministry of Bro. Russell.

Thus when the Lord directed the work of the Harvest after 1874, the first message was "come out of her". and "Babylon the great is fallen." Then the Lord provided, by present truth, a refuge for those that left Babylon --ecclesias or separated congregations began to appear in most of the countries of the world. Harvest activities began--tracts by the millions --pilgrims totaling about three score traveled across the lands to encourage those who were new and older in the way. Bro. Russell with his great energy and love of the Master became the one to whom all the brethren looked for answers and direction. His 50,000 pages of writings, his newspaper-weekly sermons found a reading audience of some 15 millions. Surely the "fields were white unto harvest" and the Lord of the harvest was behind the scenes using the sickle (Rev. 14:14) to find His wheat.

Then came 1914 with the outbreak of world-wide war to mark the end of the times of the Gentiles. This verified the remarkable prophetic understanding of Bro. Russell to exactly pinpoint the year for the time of Gentile downhill slide and the return of favor to natural Israel. Then came early October, 1916--Bro. Russell put the finishing touches on his writings by the forewords to each of the six volumes. Looking back, this seems to have been one of the very clear evidences of Our Lord (who was holding the only remaining messenger in His hand) believed it necessary that His Messenger would reverify his

confidence in both the Bible chronology, prophetic fulfillments for the end of the age, and other doctrinal declarations set forth in his writings.

Then came October 31, 1916 and the death of Brother Russell. Newspapers in many areas of the world came out with headlines--"Pastor Russell is dead." Not only was it a shock to many of the world, but within the family of Bible Students it was more than a shock. Soon a period of dismay, vexation, sorrow, worry came over the minds of many, many brethren. Then came into fulfillment the remaining portion of the prophecy of Zech. 13:7. Let me repeat it, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon the little ones."

It was noted that with great care our Lord, while with His brethren in the Garden only repeated the portion of the prophecy that could refer to Him. He was the shepherd and His death scattered His sheep--until He turned His hand to bring them together again. But what about the "man that is my fellow"? Since no other time in the history of the true church--from Pentecost to 1916--was there an occasion that could fulfill a second scattering of the sheep like that which occurred following 1916, we must conclude that Bro. Russell was in prophecy, or probably it should be stated that the seventh messenger was prophesied, as "the man who is my fellow." Normally the word fellow means a friend or associate. In this text, according to the Hebrew, the word means, fellowship as a partner in communion. In both cases of the Shepherd and the "fellow" it was the sword--God's command--that set the time for the death.

Then by early 1917 a change had come over Bethel. A new command had come into power by usurpation. Rutherford had completely ignored all the fine detailed instructions that Bro. Russell had prepared in case of his death prior to the end of the church. Soon by 1922, new and changed doctrines became evident. The scattering of the sheep became worse. To others, however, careless in appreciation of the Harvest Truth, they soon became reconciled to the changes and gave alliance to the "channel." Some, believing that God would correct the system continued along and in time lost the will to fight. These perhaps forgot that God, in times past never corrected a system or organization that slipped into error. God's method has been to call His own out.

But what about the portion of the text, "and I will turn my hand upon the little ones?" No! Our loving God did not forget. To the watchful sheep after 1916, those who sorrowed at the passing of the Pastor (as the man "who is my fellow"), was given the task of a fresh restudy of the writings of the Pastor. Some few separated from the Society almost immediately, and many more left by 1926. Small classes reformed in the late twenties and

the basis of study was the same truth that the Lord used to gather the saints after 1874. Since the "hands of Zerubbabel will finish it?" the Lord used the same tools and the same Chart of the Ages.

And now, brethren, we have come many years beyond 1916 or 1922 or 1926. What have we seen? To the faithful sheep of the Master--a complete return to the "meat in due season" provided by the Lord at His return in 1874. This has been the manner in which our loving God and His Son have turned their hand: upon the little ones. Their attained smallness permits them to humbly acknowledge that they know their Master's crib and have no desire to seek food from other tables or from other cribs. May we dear brethren, continue as little ones, close to the side of the shepherd and eat in His pasture confident that it is of the goodness and quality to fully enable us to complete our course in victory.