

page 33

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CONTENTS

"Love as Brethren" 35
 Berean Bible Studies on the Tabernacle..... 37
 The Lesson of the Flood..... 37
 The Cause of the Flood..... 39
 Giants in These Days Also..... 40
 "The Gifts and Callings of God" 41
 The Divine Promise..... 42
 "This is the Way; Walk Ye in It"..... 42
 "Which Seed is Christ"..... 43
 Sure to Both the Seeds..... 44
 The Danger of Covetousness..... 45
 "Lead Us Not Into Temptation"..... 46
 How Readest Thou?--Carefully?..... 47

page 34

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R3931 : page 34

OUR ACTIVE COLPORTEUR LIST

We like to think of all the friends of the Truth as being Colporteurs at heart, even though not privileged to engage actively in this blessed harvest work which the Lord has so greatly favored. Our Colporteur list has grown to over five hundred, but many of these dear friends, who originally started in with the intention of giving all or a considerable portion of their time, have met with disappointments and been unable to fulfil the desires of their hearts in this regard. We appreciate the love and interest of all these, but for practical purposes it has become necessary for us to trim down this list, so that it will contain only the Active Colporteurs. This does not signify that the others may not do all they can, but merely means that those who are not active in the service, but who do what they can, will all be treated alike and served to the extent of our ability, but not by the regular Colporteur Department which handles the letters and fills the orders of the active workers.

Hereafter those recognized as active Colporteurs will be expected (1) to have definite written assignments of territory before sending in orders; (2) they will be expected to send orders for never less than twenty-five volumes of the Scripture Studies or DAWNS in one order, and this order on regular order blanks, supplied free from this office; (3) they will be expected to make regular reports the first and fifteenth of each month

R3932 : page 34

on report blanks, also supplied free from this office; (4) all such are requested to use the printed Colporteur envelopes supplied free, or if temporarily out of these to use another envelope, writing on the lower left corner the words, "Colporteur Department." Others than active Colporteurs will please not use these envelopes. Those selling DAWNS or STUDIES at odd times, purchasing not over 25 books at a time by mail or express at rates usually given on page 2 of TOWER need no assignment and will be hereafter known as "Sharp Shooters."

We are sure that all the dear friends will be glad to assist in any manner, and a compliance with these suggestions will be one way of assisting the office force, which, with the increase of orders, is kept exceedingly busy. The prospects for new Colporteurs and for a very widely extended field of service for the present year encourages us greatly, and we bid them all God speed!--all the dear co-laborers looking shortly for the reward and the "Well done" of our Redeemer.

THE PASSOVER MEMORIAL, MARCH 28, 1907

The date for the observance of the Memorial of our Lord's "Last Supper" this year will be Thursday night (after 6 p.m.) March 28th. We trust that our readers in Asia, Africa, Australia and Alaska will get this notice in season and celebrate in unison with us the great event which sealed the Abrahamic or "Everlasting Covenant" for us, and will seal the "New Covenant" for Israel and the whole world, shortly.

page 34

HEAVENLY MANNA--NEW EDITION

Our supply of "Heavenly Manna" (cloth) is exhausted, and we trust that every copy of the first edition of 20,000 is doing good service every day. We still have nearly 100 in leather binding--60 cents, postpaid. We propose a new edition with twice as many leaves (alternately blank for autographs and birth-dates). Due notice of these will appear in these columns; but do not expect them for at least six months.

HYMNS OF DAWN WITH MUSIC

Our readers have for years inquired for this book. We now have it for you in handsome cloth binding and at cost price. It is the best and the cheapest hymn book in the world at 35 cents per copy, postpaid, and contains 333 of the choicest hymns of all ages. By express, collect, 25c each, in any quantity.

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R3932 : page 35

"LOVE AS BRETHREN"

--1 PETER 3:8--

LOVE for the brethren is set forth in the Scriptures as one of the indisputable evidences of our having attained membership in the body of Christ. This love may be of varying degrees, but it must be ours in some degree if we are the Lord's, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." (Rom. 8:9.) But this flame of sacred love for the brethren kindled in our hearts is not sufficient; it must blaze, burn, and produce in us not merely a warmth of love but a consuming love--love which will not only overlook various weaknesses and imperfections in the brotherhood, and will carefully note every good quality, but love which is ready to lay down life on behalf of the brethren because they belong to Christ, because they are of his consecrated ones, however much they may

need to strive against sin and weaknesses.

As we have previously pointed out, the Gospel message fails to attract many of the noblest, least-fallen members of the race, because they have a self-satisfied feeling, and do not realize their need of a Savior, but think of him as necessary only to the more degraded of the race. On the contrary, the less known, more depraved, realizing to some extent their miserable condition, are more likely than the others to respond to the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The sin-sick and heavy laden, therefore, constitute the majority of true believers. And in harmony with this we have the words of the Scripture that not many wise, not many noble, not many learned, not many great according to the flesh have been called of God to the privileges of his Church, the elect class. Consequently when any of the more noble minded or better educated or more talented accept the Lord's grace, it becomes somewhat of a trial to them to find amongst those whom they must recognize as brethren (because of faith in Christ and desire for the higher things) some of the ignoble, whose company and fellowship according to the flesh they would have scorned. This is another reason why not many great, wise, learned and noble will not make their calling and election sure--many such will allow their fleshly instincts to govern, and repudiating the humblest member of the body of Christ they are to that extent repudiating the Head, who has accepted that member, and who demands of all who would be his members that they shall love one another as he loved them.

True, the Lord does not say that we should love all the brethren with the same degree or intensity of love: on the contrary, he showed by his own conduct that we may indeed more highly esteem those who have most of his Spirit, those whose hearts are most in accord with the divine will. Thus our Lord, while he loved all of his disciples, had some special favorites, Peter, James and John. His special love for these was doubtless because of their special interest and zeal for him and for the cause he served. So, therefore, may we, followers in the footsteps of Jesus, have special love for all who are specially zealous and true hearted. But this love ignores wealth, education, earthly standing--ignores the flesh and takes cognizance of the spirit, the will, the heart.

Tested by this love for the brethren, many who had a loving respect for the Lord as their Redeemer have apparently hindered their own spiritual development, slackened in their race for the prize--running the risk of losing the great reward because of their failure to come up to this divine requirement, "Love as brethren." The proper course for all such is to think of the matter soberly from the Scriptural standpoint, and to decide that the humility requisite to an acceptance of some of the naturally less noble is undoubtedly a necessary

element of character for them to develop. Amongst the fruits of the Spirit the Apostle names meekness. The unmeek, the proud, are not in the condition of heart for the Kingdom; and the higher stations of life, intellectually, morally and socially, are unfavorable to meekness, humility and long suffering with the weaknesses and frailties of others. We see, then, that while

R3932 : page 36

the weaker brethren, the naturally more impaired, have more to struggle against, more to overcome in one sense of the word, the others of more noble birth and talents have a harder battle along other lines. Let both classes be encouraged, for although the lessons they must learn are considerably different, the results to be obtained are the same, and the instructor, the great Teacher, is the same. He is able to assist the ignoble to gradually overcome their natural meanness and depravity, and to war more and more a good warfare in his name and by his assistance; and he is likewise able to assist the more noble minded to exercise patience, sympathy, toward the less reputable. They have an illustration in himself: he who was rich in every sense of the word and beyond all compare, perfect in every element of character, talented, noble--he for our sakes became poor, he humbled himself on our behalf, he took the bondman's place, he suffered in our room and stead, he died the just for the unjust. He has therefore set us an example that we may walk in his steps, and the more nobility we may have naturally the more readily we shall be able to do this, and to appreciate and exercise the fruits of the Spirit, and grow up more and more in accord, in sympathy, in likeness to him.

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES"

There is a difference between the injunction to love as brethren and to lay down our lives for the brethren. Whatever we may do for any member of the body of Christ, for any consecrated believer, the Lord tells us he will esteem as though it were done unto him. Hence as it would be our duty and our privilege and our joy to lay down our lives in the service of the Lord, we must attain to such a love for the brethren, because they are his, that we will delight to lay down our lives for them as a means of demonstrating to the Lord our loyalty to him and his cause. This does not necessarily mean the laying down of physical strength and health and life in the physical services and ministries to the brethren, though these may be and are in many instances very profitable. It is not according to the flesh that the Lord's followers are brethren but according to the spirit, and hence the injunction to lay down our lives for the brethren would more particularly signify

the laying down of our physical health or strength, knowledge, talents and means in the service of the spiritual interests of the Lord's people. As for instance, in the preaching of the Truth, if there be sacrifices or self-denials, loss of strength, etc., in connection with this service, it is the laying down of that much of one's life for the brethren, for the fellow-members of the body of Christ.

These brethren for whom we are to lay down our

R3933 : page 36

lives are not merely those who are with us in fellowship of spirit, in the enjoyment of Present Truth. Perhaps we may have fewer opportunities for laying down our lives for such than for other brethren. For instance, there are brethren, true believers in the Lord, truly consecrated to him, who are yet in Babylon--in bondage, in darkness. These especially need that we should devote some of our time or influence or means for their aid, for their deliverance. True, the Lord himself could deliver them, because all things are in his power, including all the gold and silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills. But he has graciously left opportunities for us, that we may use the time, talents and means put within our control and which we have consecrated to his service. How much it would be to our disadvantage were we so situated that we had no opportunities for exercising these talents in the service of our King; how much we would lose of the joys of the service and sacrifice; how much we would miss of the spiritual exercise and the growth which this exercise assures. God, therefore, has left open before us doors of opportunity for service to the brethren, and the degree of our love for the brethren is measured in his sight by the zeal with which we endeavor to use the talents in our control. Let this thought of our love, zeal and devotion for the brethren, which testify to the Lord our love and zeal for himself nerve us to greater energy and faithfulness in his joyful service.

We remarked above that loving as brethren is a different matter. As we grow in grace and knowledge --as the love that is of God, that is inspired by his Spirit, grows in our hearts and fills us, being "shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. 5:5)--we are led to still wider love--beyond the household of faith, for whom we delight to lay down our lives. We learn to love all mankind, yea, even those who misunderstand us and are therefore our enemies--we learn to love all these as brethren. Not as brethren in Christ--that is a very special, very dear relationship--but we learn to love them as brethren of the one family of Adam, redeemed by Jesus and hence by purchase the family of the second Adam.

As we grow in grace and knowledge we are able more clearly day by day, year by year, to appreciate

the fact that the whole world was born under sin and are children of wrath, blinded by ignorance and superstition, mentally and physically unbalanced through the fall, and really in a terrible state, as the Apostle declares, a "groaning creation." In proportion as we are able to take God's standpoint in looking at the poor, fallen world, we are able to sympathize with them, even as the Scriptures declare that God looked down and beheld the groans of the prisoners--prisoners of sin, in captivity to death, going down to the tomb. (Psa. 102:19,20.) We realize that they were born in sin, shapen in iniquity, that in sin their mothers conceived them--that in addition to this their associations with evil have all tended to drag them downward, and that, furthermore, Satan the great adversary, a wily foe to our race, is continually exerting his powers to blind the minds of their understanding and to misrepresent the divine character and plan.

With all this before our minds, what sympathy it gives us for our brothers according to the flesh, sinners, strangers, aliens, foreigners, yet redeemed, and in

R3933 : page 37

God's gracious plan en route for the glorious blessings of the Millennial age. We say to ourselves, If God so loved these, if Christ died for them as well as for us, why should not we be very merciful, very compassionate, very sympathetic with them, and do all in our power to assist them out of darkness into God's marvellous light, out of the ways of sin into the ways of righteousness, out of bondage to Satan into the liberty wherewith God has made us free--the liberty of the sons of God, which he has promised shall be available to all peoples, kindreds, nations and tongues in the sweet by and by.

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page 37

BEREAN BIBLE STUDIES ON THE TABERNACLE

THE FIRST ATONEMENT-DAY SACRIFICE

"TABERNACLE SHADOWS," CHAP. IV.

In the references below, Z. represents this journal and T. stands for Tabernacle Shadows. The references should be given to brethren and sisters for reading in the classes. Free comment should be permitted either before or after each reading.

FEBRUARY 10

1. What did the Day of Atonement signify? T.49, par. 1,2.
2. In what way was it related to all subsequent types?
3. Who was the antitype of the Chief or High Priest in his relation to the under priests? T.49, par. 2.
4. Who was the antitype of the High Priest in his relation to all Israel? T.49, par. 2.
5. In this latter sense whom did Israel typify? T.49, par. 2.
6. What period of time in the antitype is indicated in the consecrating of the priesthood? T.50, par. 1.
7. What period of time is typified in the sacrifice of the "sin offerings"? and when do they cease? T.50, par. 2.
8. When are the blessing and glory for the world under this glorious High Priest due to begin? T.50, par. 2,3.

FEBRUARY 17

9. Of what order of priesthood will the glorified Christ be? T.50, par. 2.
10. What will be the three-fold work of the completed Christ? T.51, par. 1.
11. Did Jesus thus offer himself to the Jewish people at his first Advent? and why? T.50, par. 4 and top of 51.
12. What did the rejection of Jesus by the Jews and its consequences foreshadow in this age?
13. What will be required of the world after the triple work of the Christ has been fulfilled? T.50, par. 3.
14. What will be the consequences upon any who fail to measure up perfectly to all requirements? T.50, par. 3; Acts 3:23.
15. What clear distinction between the human nature and the "new creature" is shown in these types, and how? Lev. 8:14; 16:11,15; T.51, par. 3; A.179, par. 3; B.126, par. 1,2, and 127, par. 1.
16. Why was it necessary for our Lord to become a man? T.52, par. 1.

FEBRUARY 24

17. As Jesus gave himself as our "ransom" price, taking Adam's place in death, how could he ever live again without annulling his work as Redeemer? T.52, par. 2.
18. What hope or promise did the Father set before Jesus as a reward for becoming man's "ransom"? T.52, par. 3, and top of 53.
19. When was the death of the antitypical bullock, "the man, Christ Jesus," reckoned as having taken place? T.53, par. 2,3,4; 54, par. 1.
20. Where was the bullock slain? and what did this typify? T.54, par. 3.
21. For whom was the blood of the bullock shed? and what did this signify? T.55, par. 2; Lev. 16:12.

22. Why were Aaron and his sons washed before being clothed with the holy garments or entering the "Holy"? Ex. 29:4-9; Lev. 16:4.

23. Did the High Priest wear the same garments during the Day of Atonement as he wore at the time of his consecration to the priesthood? and if not why not? Lev. 16:4.

24. As the garments of glory and beauty represented the glorified Christ, Head and body, why did he wear them at the time of his consecration and anointing to the priesthood? See Lev. 8:7-10.

ANS.--This shows how God foreknew and had foreordained the entire office and work of the antitypical priest, before Jesus was anointed. Those robes represented the high priest's future work.

MARCH 3

25. Why did Aaron make the "sin offering" "for himself" as well as for all "the members of his house"? and what did this typify? T.55, par. 2.

26. What was the typical significance of the High Priest's filling his hands with "sweet incense," and taking it with the blood into the "Holy" and offering it upon the "golden altar"? T.55, par. 2.

27. What was the meaning of the censer of burning coals upon which the incense was crumbled? T.55, par. 2.

28. What was typified by the cloud of smoke therefrom that penetrated beyond the "vail" into the "Most Holy"? T.55, par. 2.

29. Why must Aaron tarry for a time in the "Holy" before proceeding with the blood of the bullock into the "Most Holy"? T.56, par. 1,2.

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R3933 : page 37

THE LESSON OF THE FLOOD

--GENESIS 8:1-16.--FEBRUARY 3.--

Golden Text:--"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."--Psa. 37:39.

BEFORE seeking the lesson of the flood it is appropriate that we inquire, Was there a flood? The answer of the oldest histories attest the fact that there was. The Bible record itself we may estimate as one of the oldest, if not the original, of these histories, for reliance cannot be placed upon the dates assigned by scientists to the baked clay tablets found in the ruins of Nineveh. In their endeavor to find something older than the Bible, from which they claim the Bible account was made up, they add thousands of years to the antiquity of the flood, and thus

quite disagree with the Bible records, which we hold are in nowise invalidated by their guessing. The genealogy from Noah to Abraham and Moses is clearly set forth, with a directness not even imitated in the Babylonian records.

The Apostle forewarns us that the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God, even as the wisdom and plan and revelations

R3933 : page 38

of God are foolishness to these "wise men." In their efforts to disprove the faith of Jews and Christians-- in their endeavor to ignore all divine revelation and, if possible, to ignore a personal Creator, they make an attack upon the book of Genesis, affecting to be able to distinguish the interweaving of two different accounts, assuming that if this were true the credibility of the Scriptures would be impaired, and that the world would be obliged to reject the thought of a divinely inspired account and to accept as scientific truth the conjectures of these "wise men." On this subject we quote from Reverend Peloubet, D.D. He says:--

"The contradictions or criticisms are from those who not only see two narratives, but take for granted that each one is the whole. The Babylonian traditions of the deluge, which many critics regard as the source of the Bible account, contain the combined narrative. There are almost universal traditions of a flood, with great similarity of details. The most important of these is the Chaldean account, written on clay tablets found among the ruins of Nineveh and now in the British Museum. There is nothing in geology to discredit the story of the deluge, but much to confirm the fact."

On this subject another writer, LeNormant, says:--

"The account of the deluge is a universal tradition in all branches of the human family, with the sole exception of the black race. And a tradition everywhere so exact and so concordant cannot possibly be referred to an imaginary myth....It must be the reminiscence of an actual and terrible event...near to the primitive cradle of mankind, and previous to the separation of the families from whom the principal races were to descend."

Professor Willis J. Beecher, D.D., on this subject, says:--

"Whatever inspiration one holds that they have must be predicated on the Scriptures rather than of the sources. It is the Scriptures in their present form that have won their way to universal acceptance as a great literature.... The literary excellence of the passage is due to the authors who put the Scriptures in their present form. As for the alleged contradictions, they do not exist."

In reply to the criticism that one part of the account mentions the fact that seven pairs of clean animals were preserved and another verse relates that the animals went in two and two, Professor Beecher remarks properly that, "The statement that all the animals went in by pairs is entirely consistent with the statement that some of them went in by sevens."

THE EXTENT OF THE DELUGE

We have discussed this matter in "Scripture Studies" (DAWN), Vol. VI., chapter I., but here give a quotation from Peloubet. He says:--

"It is the opinion of almost all, even the most conservative, that the deluge was limited in extent. 'Earth' is frequently used where it must mean the land, the 'region,' where men existed. When the account says that 'all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered' by the waters of the flood, and that 'every living substance was destroyed,' a reasonable interpretation in accordance with our own knowledge of the frequent use of language in literature--often exemplified in the Bible itself--would regard it as from the standpoint of the observer, and not necessarily imply that the total earth was covered, but only the regions known to man and inhabited by man. Thus, when the Savior said that the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth, and the Acts report that in Jerusalem at Pentecost were people 'out of every nation under heaven,' they would not be proved untruthful nor even inexact if land should be found further away than Sheba or a tribe that was not represented at Pentecost."

THE PREPARATION OF THE ARK

Some skeptics have made sport of the Scriptural record of the size of the Ark, and again of the Bible's declaration that up to the time of the flood there had been no rain on the earth--that vegetation was sustained by a mist that arose. (Gen. 2:6.) The latter objection we have answered quite at length in "Scripture Studies" (DAWN), Vol. VI., chapter I., showing that the waters of the deluge up to that

R3934 : page 38

time had constituted a heavy film or envelope which encased the earth, and which by divine arrangement broke and descended upon the world partly in heavy rain and partly by a great flood from the two poles. As for the objections to the size and proportions of the Ark we quote the following:--

"Modern vessels, being built for swift sailing, are much longer in proportion to their width than was the Ark. The Ark was of three stories, built of gopher wood, probably cypress, a resinous fir. It was made water tight by covering it with bitumen (asphalt), which abounded in that region as well as around the Dead Sea. Around it, close to the roof for safety, an opening for light and ventilation, one cubit high, ran around the four sides, interrupted by beams or poles supporting the roof. Rooms, literally nests or cells, were made in three tiers for the accommodation of the animals. They would strengthen the whole structure. There was a single door. The dimensions given of the Ark, compared with our large modern ships, are:--

LENGTH	WIDTH	HEIGHT
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The Ark, 300 cubits, 450 ft.; 50 cubits, 75 ft.; 30 cubits, 45 ft.
"Wilhelm der Grosse," 648 " 65 " 45 "
"Great Eastern," 680 " 82.5 ft.; 58 "

"Geike writes: 'In the beginning of the seventeenth century, says J. D. Michaelis, a ship was built with a round hull, after the proportions given in Genesis 6, and it was found to the astonishment of all, that these proportions given in the oldest book in the world were precisely the most advantageous for safety and for stowage. Peter Jansen, a Mennonite, who lived at Hoorn in North Holland, was its builder; and his Ark differed from Noah's only in size. When launched it proved to be able to bear one-third more freight than other ships of the same measurement. The Dutch at once began to build others like it, calling them Noah's arks, and they ceased to be used only because they could not carry cannon.'"

THE PERIOD OF THE FLOOD

The very minute account of the flood seems to indicate that from the time Noah and his family and his sons' families and the beasts, birds, etc., entered the Ark and the raining began, until the time that the earth was totally dried, was a full year of 365 days. We read that Noah was 600 years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth (Gen. 7:6); and again, "It came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month and the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth." (Gen. 8:13.)

R3934 : page 39

The record seems to be that it rained for forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:12), and that the great fountains of waters were completely ruptured, broken up (the main body of the flood coming to the earth from the poles), so that the waters continued to increase or prevail upon the earth for 150 days after it ceased raining--a period of six months or more. Then not only was the rain restrained but the windows of heaven were stopped and the fountains of the deep.

Gradually the waters began to assuage until on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the Ark rested or grounded upon the Ararat mountains (Gen. 8:4), the waters continuing to decrease for another month, when surrounding and lower mountains were plainly visible; and forty days thereafter Noah--by way of determining how greatly the flood had subsided--sent forth a raven and a dove, which flew away and returned repeatedly until the dove returned to him with a green olive sprig, by which he knew that the waters were assuaged even to the valleys, and a week later the dove returned not to him, indicating that habitable conditions prevailed in the earth. Under the direction of the Lord, Noah and all under his care left the Ark on the twenty-seventh day of the second month; and since he entered the Ark on the seventeenth day of the second month, this would apparently imply a period of one year and ten days, but

the difference is accounted for by the fact that the time is measured in lunar months.

THE CAUSE OF THE FLOOD

As already shown (Vol. VI., chap. I.), Noah's flood was a result of the breaking of the last one of the great rings which originally surrounded the earth, after the manner that we now see the rings of Saturn. But the time of the breaking of this envelope of water causing the deluge was so timed by divine wisdom and foreknowledge as to meet a crisis in the affairs of mankind. Had God foreseen that Adam would not have sinned, and that subsequent events respecting the race would not have transpired, he doubtless would have predestinated that the rain of waters should have occurred before creating man in the earth. The crisis is particularly explained Scripturally by the statement, "The earth was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence." (Gen. 6:11.) We naturally and properly inquire how this could be, since God had created man in his own image and likeness?

The answer Scripturally given is that the sin of disobedience was the start and that the blemish extended to all of Adam's race, of whom it is declared that they "were born in sin, shapen in iniquity." (Psa. 51:5.) But more than this, the record is that the violence caused by human deflection was accentuated from an outside source--the angels, the "sons of God," who, singing together in the morning of creation, had been given a supervisory work to do in respect to mankind. But the example of sin and degradation proved to be contagious, so that, as the apostles Peter and Jude describe, some of those angels left, abandoned, their first estate--their angelic estate--and assuming human organizations, which they had been privileged to do for the purpose of benefiting and assisting mankind, they misused those bodies and preferred to be men rather than to be angels, and, as the account in Genesis 6:1-5 shows, these angels in their assumed human bodies had improper intercourse with humanity.--2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.

Those "sons of God" saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all that they chose. As a result giants were born to them, "mighty men," "men of renown." The intimation is that these of illegitimate birth--contrary to divine arrangement and order--were far superior to the race of Adam, which by that time, centuries after the fall, were considerably degraded. The race of Adam were not matches at all for these giants and renowned ones, who both intellectually and physically were their superiors and ruled them ruthlessly and filled the earth with violence. How widespread was this corruption of the race by improper intercourse with the sons of God is shown by two statements: first, "All flesh had corrupted his way"; and again, "Noah only have I found perfect," not corrupted by these improper practices. This probably included Noah's family as well as himself, they being under his influence and direction.

This accounts to us for the utter destruction of the human race. It was no longer of purely Adamic stock, as God had designed; it was unfit, not proper for his further use in connection with the divine plans, except Noah and his family. Nor could Noah's preaching on the subject influence his relatives, friends and neighbors; they were so thoroughly ensnared and under the influence of the nephilim (giants), "mighty men," that they scoffed at Noah and his work and his preaching righteousness instead of repenting. The result was their taking away in death through the flood and the sparing only of Noah and his family, who were "perfect in their generation"--not impaired, not blemished, not commingled with the seed of angels, but of purely Adamic stock--to perpetuate the human race and carry out the divine purpose in its creation.

The redemption of Adam and his race by our Lord's sacrifice, and the securing thereby of an opportunity for their resurrection to perfection, eternal life, that was lost in Adam, in no sense of the word affects those "giants" of renown, for they were illegitimate. Their life came not through father Adam, and hence was not redeemed by Christ. They were an unlawful and in every way illegitimate race, and are hopelessly extinct.

THE LESSON OF THE FLOOD TO US

Our Lord Jesus calls our attention to the flood and the incidents connected therewith, and clearly intimates some parallel in the end of this Gospel age, describing which he says, "As it was in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking, planting and building, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, even thus shall it be in the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man." True, our Lord does not say that the similarity will be in the wickedness nor in the taking away, but merely in the knowing not of the time. However, he does intimate that some great catastrophe or calamity is to be expected in the end of this age which in some sense or degree will correspond to the calamity in the days of Noah. Turning to the Epistle of Peter (1 Pet. 3:20,21) we find there a reference to Noah, and the suggestion that Noah and his family saved in that flood typified or represented the Gospel Church saved in the flood or

R3935 : page 40

calamity which is about to overwhelm the world. This seems a further corroboration of our Lord's intimations and becomes the more impressive, especially as Peter is describing the incidents connected with the ending of this age and the inauguration of this new dispensation, just as did Jesus in his reference to Noah's day. Peter says that the Ark salvation "was a like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us." What is the figure? We reply that the flood of water which there submerged the world meant the death of the world, while Noah and his family although submerged in the same water were hidden in the Ark, and thus by the

Ark their lives were spared. Similarly here we who are baptized into Christ, who become members of his body, enter the Ark of safety, although we are baptized into his death according to the flesh, are raised or saved, and on the other side the flood, on the other side the great calamity of death, in the new dispensation, in the "new earth" which the Scriptures describe, we shall live and be the representatives of God in establishing the new order of things. It is in harmony with this that the Scriptures represent Jesus as the Father of the everlasting age--the Life-Giver to all who will ever attain life eternal. All lost their lives through disobedience, through sin; our Lord Jesus paid the ransom price redeemed us with his own precious life, and proposes to succor, to give life to as many as will obey him. The whole period of the Millennial age is apportioned to this opportunity, and we who now accept of his grace are to be made participants with him in that glorious work--as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife.

GIANTS IN THESE DAYS ALSO

St. Peter intimates that as a flood of waters destroyed the human family in Noah's day, so fire will destroy in the end of this age. Elsewhere we have seen that the fire will be on a higher plane--symbolical fire or destruction--a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation, in the which not only the heavens of religious authority and power shall pass away with a great commotion, a fire, but the earth also (the present social structure, financial, political, social) shall melt with fervent heat--the various elements, such as the labor element, the capitalistic element, the political element, the religious element, shall melt in the fervency of the heat and passion and discord of that time.

We remember Zephaniah's description of the same great event when, after telling that the whole earth will be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy, he adds, "Then will I turn unto the people a pure message that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3:8,9.) Thus we are shown that the fire which shall devour the whole earth will not be a literal one, but the people will be left, though the social structure will be entirely consumed, and that then the Lord will give unto the people his message in its purity. The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in its beams, and the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the great deep.--Mal. 4:2; Isa. 11:9.

It was the improper blending of spiritual and natural matters that brought to pass the giants of olden times, through whom came the violence in the earth preceding the cataclysm of the deluge. Is it remarkable that we find a correspondency in our time? Have we not giants today--of renown--of almost illimitable power amongst men? Are not these what are termed the "trusts" and financial princes of the earth, financially strong beyond any dream of the past? Is it not through the operation of these that the great time of trouble and violence is coming upon the world?

Surely the picture is this precisely.

Now, then, in what sense were these giant corporations and trusts and massive fortunes developed? Are they of heathen origin? O, no! The heathen never dreamed of such things, never imagined the might and power over men which is in the grasp of these institutions. The heathen themselves indeed suffer from these very giants, who are using the machinery of government in Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, France and elsewhere to training their hands to increase their power and their revenues by the coercion of the heathen peoples, as in South Africa and elsewhere, for filthy lucre's sake, for the increase of the strength of the giants. Do not these giants really manage the wars and rule the kingdoms of earth? Surely it is so. But if not of natural or heathen origin whence came these giants? We answer that they are the offspring of a misdirected spiritual energy. The Spirit of the Lord operating in his consecrated people has exercised an enlightening influence all around them, amounting to what is known as present-day civilization. The majority of those thus civilized are far from being truly, Christianized; nevertheless the enlightenment which they have comes, proceeds, from Christianity.

It is this enlightenment, improperly received and improperly exercised in the world, that has begotten the spirit of selfishness, which has reached its development and maturity in these giants. The whole earth will shortly be in their power, in their grasp, unless the Lord in his providence shall permit some great calamity to overthrow present institutions. This he tells us he is about to do. He is about to permit the "wrath of man to praise him," to work the overthrow, to enkindle the fire between capital and labor, between the giants and those who are more and more coming under their pressure and control--to wage a battle to the death, which will really mean the perishing of our civil, religious, political, social, financial institutions of this present time, in the great time of fire and trouble--in anarchy.

Who will be saved in this time? Who will survive this storm? The Word of the Lord to his consecrated followers is, "Watch ye, therefore, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape those things coming upon the earth and to stand before the Son of man." We are to watch that we may not fall into this general trouble and snare that is coming upon the whole world to try the hearts of men, to run deep the ploughshare of trouble which eventually, under the new dispensation, shall be a blessing, but which in the present time will be only a most terrible trouble. Thank God that there is a rainbow promised, yea, a rainbow that is seen by those who have the eye of faith and look upon matters through the Word of God. The rainbow is the divine promise that never more shall there be such a great calamity upon the world, that with this calamity will be introduced the Kingdom of God's dear Son, and that never again shall the world be left, neither to fallen man nor to demons of the prince of this world nor to the kingdoms of this world, but

he who redeemed the world shall be its Lord and King, and the dominion shall not be given to other people nor left to others; but when Messiah shall have conquered and put down all insubordination, and everything contrary to the divine will, then the Kingdom shall be delivered to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all.

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R3935 : page 41

"THE GIFTS AND CALLINGS OF GOD."

--GENESIS 12:1-8.--FEBRUARY 10.--

Golden Text:--"I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing."

OUR LESSON relates to the call of Abram (high father), whom God renamed Abraham (father of a multitude), although indirectly the special point of the lesson refers to the calling of Abraham's seed, natural and spiritual, and the divine bestowments to them, constituting them the centers of hope to the world of mankind. Already they have been greatly used of the Lord, but the Scriptures indicate that their influence and usefulness toward their fellow-creatures have only begun, and will reach their glorious culmination during the Millennium. Abraham's early life was spent at Ur of Chaldea, the ruins of which (now known by the name of Mugheir) are being excavated and explored. They indicate that it was once a seat of business activity, and Professor Sayce says that the name Abram (Abu-Ramu) is found on early Babylonian contract tablets, and some tablets recently unearthed at Ur contain part of the story of the deluge. Scholars are hoping to find in these ruins the Babylonian library, containing the original tablets from which the narratives of the creation and flood were copied for the library of Nineveh.

We are to remember that Abraham was born two years after the death of Noah, and that Noah's father, Lamech, was born fifty-six years before Adam's death--hence the chain of tradition had few links up to Abraham's time, even though the period was nearly 2,000 years long. It is not strange, therefore, that the story of the creation and of the flood are found in the land of the Chaldeans at a date prior to Moses' writings--the Pentateuch. It should always be borne in mind that the Scriptures make no claim that Moses was present at the time of creation or at the time of the flood, nor that the writer was a witness of the other incidents recorded in Genesis. Moses was merely the recorder who, under the same divine supervision and direction that enabled him to be the Law-giver and commander of typical Israel, was used as God's amanuensis in recording for our benefit such events in the lives of individuals, as well as their chronologies, as would help to perfect the chain of previous history.

We should remember, also, that the records of God's doings would be appreciated by those who are loyal to him, amongst whom must be included Noah and his family, and that Abraham, as we have seen, was directly in this line--a scion of one of the best branches of Noah's immediate posterity.

THE REIGN OF SIN

The indications are that idolatry and immorality had taken firm hold upon that branch of Noah's family (Shem)

R3936 : page 41

of which Abraham came, and which is recognized to this day as the highest and noblest branch and the one most favored by the Almighty. The assumption is not unreasonable, therefore, that Abraham's father, Terah, and his two elder brothers, Haran and Nahor, were considerably influenced by this spirit of idolatry. The record is that God first communicated with Abram while he resided at Ur, indicating the propriety of a change of residence to Canaan. Apparently he had considerable influence with the family, so that they all removed from Ur, a distance of about six hundred miles northward to Haran, possibly a place of their own establishment and named after Terah's eldest son, who died about that time.

Whether it was God's revelation to Abraham or the death of his son Haran that influenced Terah and the family to remove from Ur we cannot know--possibly both incidents had their influence. However, it was not God's design to call Abraham's entire family but merely himself. Hence, apparently with the Lord's approval, Abraham remained in Haran for five years, until the death of Terah. Then, with his share of the property, with his wife Sarah, who was also his half sister, and with Lot, the son of his deceased brother Haran, Abraham carried out the divine arrangement by removing from Haran into the land of Canaan, a journey of about three hundred miles more. The clear intimation of the Scriptures is that in this matter Abraham acted in harmony with God's directions, along the lines of faith and obedience. We may infer that this obedience was rendered at the cost of earthly name and fame, and that Abraham must have been out of accord with the idolatry and licentiousness and immorality of his native place, as well as full of faith in God and fully in harmony with the divine principles of righteousness, and glad to be obedient to the Lord.

ABRAHAM WAS WEALTHY AND POWERFUL

A lesson for us here is, God first, righteousness first--before earthly prosperity, especially that which might be obtained through evil methods or other fellowship with the unrighteous. True, as the Apostle says, to have no dealings with the unrighteous might imply that we need to go out of the world, since unrighteousness is so prevalent; but as in Abraham's

case the Lord's invitation to us is to separate ourselves as much as possible from people and circumstances and conditions whose tendency is downward toward sin, and to affiliate ourselves as much as possible with those influences which would help us to a closer walk with God. Although Abraham had no children he had a large number of persons under his care. These were his servants, and how numerous they were may be judged from the fact that a little later Abraham was able to muster 318 fighting men amongst them--the company who went after those who had taken Lot's property. This number of fighting men would imply a considerably larger number in the aggregate. It would appear, therefore, that Abraham was a very powerful sheik or prince of that time, the number of whose flocks and herds, requiring so many servants must have been large indeed. No wonder his servant was able to tell Rebecca that Abraham

R3936 : page 42

was very rich. Much of those riches, of course, was gained in Canaan, but a considerable portion of it evidently went with him into Canaan.

FURTHER SEPARATION FROM IDOLATRY

When Abraham and his company had come into the land of Canaan under the Lord's direction, he settled for awhile at Shechem, that portion subsequently known as Samaria. But he did not remain there long, for, as we read, the Canaanite was still in the land. It was doubtless to be free from the immoral influences of the Canaanites, and to have his people separated from these, that Abraham removed subsequently to the mountainous country near Bethel. There he established his home, there he reared an altar to the Lord and prayed. Would that each head of a family were thus careful to look out for the interests of those under his charge, that these interests should be advantageous to their welfare everywhere! Would that more could realize how indispensable it is to have an altar to the Lord in their home, where the prayer incense would ascend to the Father through the merit of the Redeemer. The true altar not having been provided of the Lord, Abraham and others of his time reared altars of stone for use in the Lord's worship. But we have the Golden altar of the Holy, and are permitted to offer thereupon, as members of the body of the great High Priest, under him as our Head and glorious representative.

THE DIVINE PROMISE

Whenever God calls any for any purpose he sets before the called ones an object, a reason, a motive, and this he did with Abraham. He not only called him out of his own country to a life of separation from sin, but he attached to that a great promise, which had a mighty influence upon the mind of Abraham and his children and all the Jewish

nation, and since then upon all the spiritual Israelites, the Israelites indeed. The promise was that not only would Abraham receive a blessing, but that in and through him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This must have seemed a very obscure promise to Abraham, and his obedience to it was the more remarkable, so that he is held up to be as an example of a proper unquestioning faith in the word and wisdom of the Almighty--"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." He might have objected that he could do more good in Ur, where wickedness prevailed, than he could accomplish in the mountains of Palestine, where he and others under his godly influence were comparatively separate from others of the world. His faith was shown in that he did not attempt to argue the matter with the Lord, but obeyed implicitly. So it is with many of God's spiritual Israel of the present time: the call of the Lord comes, and his direction of word and providence seems perhaps from our standpoint to be not in harmony with our anticipations respecting his will and the attainment of his purposes.

And alas! how few of nominal spiritual Israel take Abraham's course and get Abraham's blessing. The obedient are only "a little flock," to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom and its great work of blessing all the families of the earth. Many of them are inclined to resist God's providences, not exercising a sufficiency of faith. Some determine that it is their mission to convert the world; others that they must engage in political reform; others that their efforts must be used in temperance work, thus bringing about a reign of righteousness. We are not disputing that all of these are good works, and that good motives are behind them; but we do claim that many of the dear friends who are zealous in these ways are not sufficiently attentive to the Word of God to be obedient to it. As a consequence, many of them are disappointed and numbers are sidetracked.

How many temperance workers have become discouraged at the paucity of results they are able to attain! How many interested in foreign missions are disappointed that, whereas the number of heathen a century ago was estimated at about 600,000,000, statistics today tell us that they now number 1,200,000,000. We appreciate, and feel sure that God appreciates, their good intentions, their good endeavors; yet they are liable to make shipwreck of their faith because not heeding with sufficient care the voice of him that speaketh from heaven and who directs us,--

"THIS IS THE WAY, WALK YE IN IT"

The spiritual lesson in the story of Abraham is that God is pleased to honor faith, and that the experiences of life which he permits to come to the faithful are intended for their development in faith and in the graces of the holy Spirit, and that these all are unitedly a preparation for God's still greater work of the future.

Abraham was not sent as a missionary back to Haran

or to Ur, nor indeed to the people who surrounded him. The Lord's message was, "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect." God, of course, knew that Abraham was actually imperfect, tainted by the fall, and this command, therefore, signified that his heart should be perfect--his will, his intentions, and his conduct as nearly as possible in harmony with God's perfect will. The Apostle Paul shows us that he was not justified on account of any righteousness of his own, for he puts Abraham with the list of ancient worthies who were justified not by the works of the Law but by faith, and who, because of their faith, "had this testimony that they pleased God." It was his faith that led Abraham into a strange country away from his kindred, because he trusted God; it was faith that enabled him to stand various tests by the way, including the command to offer up his son as a sacrifice, his only son, in whom centered all the promises.

It was his faith in the promise of God--that in a future time through his seed a reign of righteousness would be established in the earth--that led Abraham to look for that city [government] of sure foundation upon principles of righteousness--the heavenly city, the government or kingdom of God's dear Son, which is to put down all insubordination and bring everything into subjection to the divine will. The seed of Abraham, the elect Church of this Gospel age, is to exercise divine power in the earth and cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess; and after instituting a reign of righteousness and blessings thereby to all the families of the earth, is to deliver up the Kingdom, perfect and complete, to God, even the Father, at the close of the Millennial age. This was the promise made to Abraham, "In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be

R3937 : page 43

blessed." And he was willing to waive his share in the governmental position and power of the present time under present adverse conditions, that he might have some share in the glorious Messianic Kingdom of the future.

"YE SHALL SEE ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB"

When Messiah's Kingdom, itself invisible, shall establish a reign of righteousness in the earth, it will have amongst men visible representatives, "princes in the earth." (Psa. 45:16.) And we are assured that Abraham will be one of these, and will thus have to do actively, prominently, with the establishment of the reign of righteousness and the demonstrations of justice and mercy and love to the world of mankind, "to all the families of the earth." He is mentioned as one of this class in Hebrews 11:39,40. At one time, in company with others, we surmised that Abraham would have been placed in the heavenly Kingdom of the spiritual class; but a more careful consideration of the matter shows us, to the contrary, that he belongs to the class of ancient worthies of whom the Apostle declares that God has provided some better thing for us than for them, although their blessing shall

be a great one. Abraham, styled the father of the faithful, the Redeemer says, "rejoiced to see my day: and saw it and was glad." (John 8:56.) By faith he saw the day of Christ, the Millennial day, the Kingdom well founded; by faith he rejoiced in the glorious reign of righteousness then to be established.

But while this blessing is to come to the world through the seed of Abraham, the Scriptures indicate that a great change takes place by which the seed, the child of Abraham, Christ, becomes greater than Abraham, as it is written, "Instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." Abraham, instead of being viewed any longer as the father of Messiah, will be recognized as one of his children, perfect on the earthly plane and made a prince amongst men, to be used as an active agent of the glorified Christ in dispensing the blessings secured by the great redemptive sacrifice. Referring to the matter, our Lord points out the fact that these ancient worthies will be visible to men, but properly enough says not a word about himself and the apostles or any of the Bride class being visible. The statement is, "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets." The fact that the still more notable ones in the Kingdom are not referred to as seen is an evidence that they will not be seen by the world, and this comports with the Lord's statement to some in his day, "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more." It agrees also with the declaration, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Only those changed from human to spirit nature, under the terms of the Lord's arrangement of this Gospel age, will be spirit beings, and they alone therefore will be able to see, discern, the Lord and other spirit beings.

"WHICH SEED IS CHRIST"

The Apostle points out to us most distinctly that the seed of Abraham according to the flesh was Jesus, our Lord, who is now of the flesh no more, having sacrificed it and received the begetting of the Spirit to the new nature. He is now the glorified one, the Christ, Abraham's Lord and David's Lord. And the Apostle points out to us as a great mystery the fact that God during this Gospel age is selecting from amongst mankind some to be joint-heirs with Jesus in the Kingdom--to be members of the seed of Abraham. (Eph. 3:9; Acts 15:17; Rom. 8:17.) We ask how could this be, since the Law Covenant was added, and since Jesus alone fulfilled the terms of the Law Covenant and ended all the hopes and prospects it contained? Surely no Jew preceded our Lord in the matter, and surely, since our Lord has finished his course, the offer of the Law Covenant is no longer open to a Jew, as it never was open to a Gentile. Where, then, is the prospect for either Jew or Gentile being joined with Christ, in joint-heirship with Christ in this Abrahamic Covenant?

We reply that we are accepted of the Lord, as the "Bride of Christ," the "Lamb's Wife." The Church, composed

in the beginning exclusively of Jews, and subsequently almost exclusively of Gentiles, is as a whole accepted by the Lord as his Bride, and by becoming joined to him and by union or marriage with him these, whether Jews or Gentiles, are made his joint-heirs. This is the Apostle's clear statement of the matter, for after telling that Christ is the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16) he adds a word respecting the Church, his prospective Bride, saying, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29.) In the one figure we are accepted as members of the Lord's body, that is, when the Apostle says, "Ye brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise;" in another figure we are accepted as members of his Bride.

THE WIFE MADE READY

As our Lord was tested in all points yet without sin, so all of these who are counted worthy to be his members must similarly stand the testing to demonstrate their character-likeness to him and their worthiness of a share in his glorious Kingdom. Hence it does not surprise us that everywhere throughout the Scriptures appeals are made to the Lord's people, not so much respecting what they shall do for others as what they shall do for themselves and for each other. We are not opposing the thought of doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, but emphasizing the other thought that we are to do good "especially to the household of faith." We are to "build one another up in the most holy faith," we are to "lay down our lives for the brethren," we are to "comfort one another," "edify one another." In a word the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, is to "make herself ready"--not without the Bridegroom's supervision and assistance, but with it and as a part of it.

As the trial of faith was the most prominent feature of Abraham's testing, so it must needs be with us, his true children. It is the trial of your faith that is much more precious than gold, as the Apostle says, and he assures us that "without faith it is impossible to please God." For this reason it is required of those who now walk in the narrow way that they shall walk by faith and not by sight. When the time comes for the shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness and the scattering of the darkness and mystery that surrounds the divine character and word and the permission of evil, there will be plenty ready and able to walk by sight; but the Lord is now looking for the few, the little flock, able and willing to walk by faith, through evil report and good report,

R3937 : page 44

to trust him where they cannot trace him, and to demonstrate their loyalty by their faithfulness and their endurance even unto death. The trials of the present time upon the Gospel Church are with a view to testing the character, with a view to determining who are worthy and who are unworthy to constitute the seed of Abraham, which God promised shall ultimately bless all the families of the earth.

SURE TO BOTH THE SEEDS

The Apostle declares that God promised not the blessing through the seeds of Abraham, as of many, but "in thy seed," as of one. We have already seen that this one seed is the Christ, but we now notice that while there are not many seeds there is another seed beside this Messianic class--a seed's seed, as it were. The Apostle clearly intimates this in his declaration respecting the Law and the Gospel, that the object was "that the promise might be sure to both the seeds," not only that which is according to the Spirit, but also that which is according to the Law. This was intimated also in the fact that a promise was made to Ishmael as well as to Isaac. But the promise to Ishmael proceeded through Isaac, the one seed of promise. Similarly the Lord's blessing on all the families of the earth must proceed through the one seed, which is Christ--the Messianic seed of Abraham.

St. Paul makes very clear that there is a double allotment of divine mercy and provision--one portion to the spiritual seed and another portion to the natural seed of Abraham. In Romans 11, where, after describing the rejection of the natural seed of Abraham and the acceptance of the spiritual seed, he points to the fact that at the end of this Gospel age the spiritual seed will be complete, and then he declares that the divine blessing shall go to the natural seed of Abraham again--to those who were once broken off, rejected and blinded because they were unable to realize and appreciate the spiritual part of the promise. For them then remains an earthly or natural part, and blessing will surely come to them, because God has already declared that "the Deliverer shall come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, because this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the Gospel they were enemies for your sakes, but as touching the promises of God they are beloved for the fathers' sakes: for the gifts and callings of God are things not to be repented of."--Rom. 11:26-29.

After thus most clearly specifying that God's gifts and callings from the remote past included the restoration of the

R3938 : page 44

Jews to divine favor at the close of the Gospel age, the Apostle proceeds to show how this blessing must come through the spiritual seed, saying, "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy"--through the mercy of the Gospel Church, the spiritual seed of Abraham, under Christ their Head.

"ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH"

The turning of God's blessing to Israel at the close of this Gospel age will include the exaltation to honorable service of the worthy ones of the past dispensation, Abraham,

Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets--"princes in all the earth"
--ensamples of perfect manhood, leaders of the people.
But it will mean more than this, for the promise was not
merely that through the seed of Abraham, spiritual, the natural
seed of Abraham should be blessed, but "In thy seed
shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Hence, as
the Apostle points out, the Gospel Church is a "first-fruits
unto God of his creatures" in one sense, a first-fruits on a
spirit plane, and natural Israel will be a first-fruits of his
creatures on an earthly plane; and in proportion to their
willingness, under the guidance of the ancient worthies,
they may be helpful to all the families of the earth in
spreading knowledge of the great Messiah and the rules and
regulations of his Kingdom, for the blessing and uplifting of
all the families of the earth.

Mark how the Apostle declared that if the rejection of
Israel meant a blessing to the Gentiles, will not the regathering
of Israel signify life from the dead to the world in
general. (Rom. 11:15.) It surely will. In order for the
seed of Abraham according to the flesh to realize the blessings
God has promised, an awakening from the sleep of death
will be necessary, since God is no respecter of persons. In
a general sense it follows that these blessings which he has
covenanted to give first to Israel, he is equally willing and
able to give to all mankind in due time. O, how much of
goodness and mercy God can crowd into a few words! How
little Abraham was able to comprehend the lengths and
breadths and heights and depths of divine blessing that was
conferred upon him when the Lord said, "Because thou hast
done this, in blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I
will multiply thy seed, and it shall be as the stars of heaven
and the sand upon the seashore."

How little Abraham could have understood that the
seed that was to be as the stars of heaven is the spiritual
seed, and that the seed that shall be as the sand upon the
seashore is the natural seed. In a word, not only those of
fleshly Israel who accepted the blessings and favors of the
Kingdom, but humanity in general, all the families of the
earth, will be privileged to become the seed of Abraham
through faith and obedience, even as we of this Gospel age
who are Gentiles have been privileged through faith and
obedience to become joint-heirs in spiritual Israel with those
Jews who were Israelites indeed at the first advent.

THE GOLDEN TEXT

God's promise to Abraham was abundantly fulfilled in
his own person: it was fulfilled also in his natural seed and
in his spiritual seed. Surely, of all, the latter is the most
blessed. What more could God say to us or do for us than
he has already said and done? Lifting us from the horrible
pit and miry clay of sin and condemnation, he has
placed our feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and put a new
song in our mouths. Yea, more, he has adopted us into his
family and made us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus
Christ our Lord "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled,

and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."--1 Pet. 1:4,5.

The declaration is added, "I will bless them that bless thee, and I will curse him that curseth thee." This does not refer to blessing by the lips or cursing by the lips merely, but rather appertains to conduct--he that does good to you,

R3938 : page 45

who favors you, I will favor; he that injures you I will permit to be injured. How this has been fulfilled in the case of the natural Jew, even in his outcast condition! Those nations which have maltreated the Jew have suffered, those which have treated him with kindness have been more or less blessed. And if we apply the same test to the Spiritual Seed of Abraham, does it not fit even better? Has there not come a blessing of the Lord to all those who have either said or done kindness to his true people, his faithful? and has not blight followed upon those who in any sense of the word have sought to do injury to the Lord's Anointed? "If God be for us who can be against us?"

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R3938 : page 45

THE DANGER OF COVETOUSNESS

--GENESIS 13:1-13.--FEBRUARY 17.--

Golden Text:--"Take heed and beware of covetousness."--Luke 12:15.

IN OUR last lesson we left Abraham located at Bethel, where he had erected an altar to the Lord, indicating his continued reverence and his determination to accept the Lord's terms in all of his affairs. A famine in the land shortly after must have served to test the patriarch's faith. Was this the goodly Canaan, flowing with milk and honey? and would it be subject to drouths and famines? and if so, would it compare at all with the rich country of Ur of the Chaldees, whence he had come? Had he made a mistake? Was God as good as his word? Why was the famine permitted to be more disastrous to him than to the Canaanites, who were not a herding and shepherding people? Never questioning the Lord's wisdom, Abraham moved southward through the promised land and into Egypt, in whose rich lowlands of Goshen, well watered, there was usually an abundant pasturage--possibly, too, he made sale of some of his stock. We are not told that this visit to Egypt was contrary to the divine word or will, but the record does show that it brought Abraham into trying experiences. His wife Sarah was very beautiful, and, as he had surmised, the

king was charmed with her and desired her for a wife. Here it was that Abraham showed a weakness in suggesting that Sarah should be known only as his sister --that her relationship as his wife should be kept secret, lest the king should kill Abraham in order to possess his wife. This is perhaps the only blemish we find in the history of Abraham. And doubtless the reproof administered by the human king for his lack of faith and lack of sincerity in the matter proved ultimately a great blessing to the patriarch; even as many a Christian has been made stronger through a realization of his blemishes.

How improper it would be for us to judge Abraham according to that one misstep, and how equally improper it would be to judge Christians in so harsh a manner. If he who is styled "the father of the faithful" on one occasion exhibited so great a lack of faith, yet profited by his rebuke and became stronger than ever and more than ever the "friend of God," what may we not hope from others who have made some missteps? Not that we encourage such lapses from duty, but that we encourage those who have unwillingly stumbled to be not utterly cast down thereby, but to arise and take a more firm hold upon the hand of the Lord and to press with vigor on. Another lesson is in respect to the faithfulness of the Word of the Lord in portraying the weaknesses as well as the strong elements of character of those with whom it deals. In this respect it is not, like other histories and narratives, so arranged as to hide their blemishes and to disclose their virtues. The Bible sets forth matters very plainly, truthfully, in a manner that carries conviction respecting the honesty of the recorder and the faithfulness of the record.

"NONE RIGHTEOUS; NO, NOT ONE"

Perfection is a thing we cannot hope to find in any member of the human race. The Scriptures are clear upon this (Rom. 3:10), and when Jesus the Messiah is introduced it is especially pointed out that he was distinctly separate from the Adamic race--that his life came not from Adam but from the heavenly Father, and that, therefore, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," suited to be the Redeemer of Adam and his race--able to give to God a ransom price. Respecting the race in general the poet has well said:--

"There is a fleck of rust on a flawless blade,
On the costly armour there is one;
There's a mole on the cheek of the lovely maid,
There are spots upon the sun."

While God sets before us the standard of perfection, saying, "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1); and again, "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48),

it is nowhere intimated that it is possible for us while still in the flesh to attain to such perfection. On the contrary it is clearly set forth in the Scriptures that

R3939 : page 45

the perfection that is possible to us is that of the heart, the mind, the will, the intent, which will insure the conduct of the mortal body being as nearly to this standard as possible. It is right that the standard before us should be a perfect one, even as we set for our children the writing lesson that is flawless, without expecting that they will be able to duplicate its perfection, but desiring that by observation of the proper standard they may approximate thereto better than if a low standard had been set. Besides, God could not set an imperfect standard: for him to do so would mean his agreement in a measure with sin.

When judging ourselves it is proper that we keep this perfect standard before us, and yet--lest we should become utterly discouraged, and faint by the way--we must remember that it was because of our inability to do perfectly that the ransom price of our Lord was provided at all. When criticising the imperfections and

R3939 : page 46

weaknesses of others through heredity we can but imperfectly judge, and it is well that we use great liberality --indeed we are forbidden to judge the motives of the heart, and are assured that God alone could properly do this. It is when we see evil fruits, and find the heart, the will, taking them up and assisting and endorsing and not denying them, that we may be sure of the wickedness of the person; but even then we are incompetent to be judges, and are not permitted to pass sentence or inflict penalty, but rather to say, "The Lord rebuke thee."--Jude 9.

Our lesson properly starts with the return of Abraham and his family, servants, flocks and herds, accompanied by his nephew Lot, who had separate interests.

The record is that Abraham was very rich, literally heavy in cattle, in silver, and in gold. The statement is apparently made to indicate that the journey from Egypt back to Bethel was a slow one; it was referred to as journeys, as though there were frequent stops. Indeed we may well suppose that, with his faith in the promise of God--that his posterity would ultimately possess that entire land--Abraham was looking about with great interest upon this future inheritance, taking especial pleasure in the slow journeys. Returned to Bethel, his previous place of settlement, we find him again a worshiper, a sacrificer, presenting offerings to the Lord with prayers and thankfulness.

Fertile though the soil of Canaan was, the flocks and herds were numerous and required a great deal of

room, and no doubt it was with difficulty that they were well watered; and since Lot had a separate establishment of his own, servants, flocks, herds, etc., it is not to be wondered at that some strife arose between the servants of Abraham and those of Lot. There is a lesson for all the Lord's people in the generous manner in which Abraham dealt with this quarrel. Pointing out the necessity for a separation, and that it was better to separate than to engender quarrels between their servants, which might ultimately culminate in a quarrel between themselves, Abraham gave Lot his choice of land. "Blessed are the peacemakers," said our Lord, and surely we have evidence here that Abraham was a man of peace and a peacemaker. Had Abraham been of a selfish spirit he would have made the choice, asserting his right by reason of seniority and the fact that the Lord had brought him thither and given the land to him, and that Lot was merely there by his sufferance and as his friend anyway, and hence should be satisfied with whatever portion would be assigned to him.

Abraham had faith in God that all things would work for his good, and that the land would ultimately be for his posterity. Thus at rest in his mind, selfishness found no room for lodgment, and the Lord overruled the matter in such a manner as to be for Abraham's ultimate welfare. This generous conduct on Abraham's part assures us that he had been similarly generous with his nephew before, and we remember the testimony of the Lord that "the liberal soul shall be made fat"; and again, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Prov. 11:24,25.) All of the Lord's people, according to their circumstances and conditions, should be generous--not merely in earthly matters but especially in their hearts, in their minds, in their thoughts, benevolent and kindly.

LOT'S COVETOUS CHOICE

The journey into Egypt opened the eyes of Lot to the luxuries of life: so now, when he attempted to make a choice for a home separate from that of Abraham, he chose that which most nearly paralleled the richness of Egypt, namely, the valley of the Jordan near its mouth, and accordingly he pitched his tent toward Sodom--that is to say, he established his headquarters at Sodom, where he would have the luxuries of town life while the herdsmen and shepherds cared for his flocks in the nearby green pastures. From a worldly standpoint Lot chose wisely, but from the true standpoint, in view of his highest interests, he made a bad choice. He should have considered the character of the people with whom he was about to dwell, their influence upon himself, his wife and daughters, for the record is that the people of Sodom were exceedingly

wicked. Abraham would not have so chosen, but as he avoided Shechem and went apart by himself, so he would have gone again even had he chosen the Jordan valley for a pasturage. He would have established a separate village for himself and for his people, and not have led them into the temptations of Sodom.

We are not to think of Lot as a bad man, who took delight in the wickedness of Sodom and chose it on that account. The Scriptures, on the contrary, designate him as "righteous Lot," and tell us that he was "sore distressed" by the lascivious life of the wicked Sodomites, "for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." (2 Pet. 2:7,8.) What then was the failure or wickedness of Lot's character that led him to choose and to remain in this undesirable locality to his own discomfort and to the injury of his family? Apparently it was his worldly mindedness, probably his desire to please his wife and his daughters. We are not intimating that he should have ignored the proper opinions and desires of his family, but, giving these legitimate weight, he should have decided that their moral interests were far above all others and should have marked his course accordingly.

There are many amongst the Lord's people today who are much in the position of Lot. They do not in time take counsel of the Lord as to what they shall do, where they shall locate, but rather run to their own understanding, and yield to the wishes of those over whom the Lord has made them the responsible caretakers. They love their families, but not wisely; they do for them, but not to their best interests and eternal welfare. They are vexed from day to day by the wickedness around them, and yet they get themselves into that very position deliberately and intentionally. The lesson is that we should follow Abraham's course and not Lot's--we should think more of the eternal interests and less of the temporalities. We are not meaning to say that all who would train their families properly must live in the country and not in the city, for circumstances alter cases, and with many of us the Lord's work and our own spiritual advancement can be better served in the city than in the country. What we do urge is that all the Lord's true people should seek first, primarily, the will of the Lord, his righteousness, his service, the things that would make for their peace and their everlasting blessing, rather than the things of time and sense and ease and worldly pleasure.

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

Our Lord taught us to pray daily, "Abandon us not to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one," and probably the majority of the Lord's people offer the sense of this prayer daily. But how foolish to pray

thus and not to watch to the same end--to escape the temptation! How foolish to pray for deliverance from a thing and then to walk deliberately into it! Yet this very evidently is the course of the majority of the Lord's people. And in proportion as this is so, in proportion as they do not seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, making it the paramount issue

R3939 : page 47

of life, they are laying themselves open to many trials, some of which the Apostle intimates may pierce them through with many sorrows. (I Tim. 6:10.) Let us all resolve, that in the momentous affairs of life and in the little matters as well, we will decide our course not according to covetousness, which is sure to blind us to the true situation and to make us unwise as respects the highest interests, but let us on the contrary make our choice with an eye single to the glory of God and to the best interests of our families and of ourselves; and having so decided, let us with kindness and with love stand forth for the right after the manner of Abraham, and like him be generous in our avoidance of quarrels or in the settlement of those quarrels which have already arisen.

As a rule, quarrels in the family and in the Church arise from selfishness and covetousness; and it is the privilege of those who are nearest to the Lord and most developed in his character-likeness to be the most generous in any quarrel. The majority of quarrels are over trifles, which can as well as not be compromised or yielded to; only in the case of principles may the Lord's people contend earnestly. And even then the contention should be in the spirit of love and benevolence --the spirit of willingness to yield to the other so far as personal preferences are concerned, but a firmness for the Word of the Lord and the principles of righteousness. In the Church when quarrels arise it

R3940 : page 47

will generally be found that the basis of the quarrel is a misunderstanding or selfishness, covetousness, a desire to be chief and greatest. It behooves each of the Lord's people under such circumstances to examine well his own heart, and to see that his own eye is good before he attempts to assist his brother who has the opposite view. Having made sure of his own generosity of heart, and intent and willingness to yield, and to see and admire and approve the good in others, he will then be prepared to reason with others and to help them to also take the proper, broad, generous view of the situation.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory," urges the Apostle--neither in the Church nor in the home. Love is the only motive power that should be

recognized amongst those who have passed from death unto life, who are New Creatures in Christ Jesus. There is generally a peaceful way of settling all differences, and our Lord himself has set it forth, and we have presented the matter in detail in DAWN, Vol. VI., chap. VI. But, where all fails, rather than allow the spirit of brotherhood to fail and enmity or anger to prevail, it were far better that those who find themselves totally unable to fellowship in love together should seek to maintain fellowship in spirit by a separation, as in the case of Abraham and Lot. Nevertheless while this is to be approved as a final resort rather than to have internal strife, the necessity for such a course would certainly be lamentable--it would certainly imply that some if not all of the company were very immature as respects the new nature, very deficient as respects the powers of a peacemaker, very lacking in the brotherly love which can hide a multitude of faults, and endure much with long-suffering and patience, gentleness, kindness and love.

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R3940 : page 47

HOW READEST THOU?--CAREFULLY?

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: I am perplexed by what I have read in the January 1 issue of the TOWER, respecting the bullock sacrificed for the Levites and the goat for the other tribes,--p. 11. Am I right in understanding you to teach that Jesus redeemed the Church and the Church is to redeem the world? If so how could this be harmonized with these Scriptures: (1) "Jesus Christ...tasted death for every man"; (2) "As all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive"; (3) "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"; (4) and that "he gave himself a ransom for all."

* * *

We reply: No, dear brother, you have misread and misunderstood the article, considerably. You have never read in any of our articles or books or sermons the statement that the Church redeems any thing or any body. Quite to the contrary: we have often been accused of making a hobby of the ransom doctrine,--that our Lord Jesus "tasted death for every man," "gave himself a ransom for all." Surely no other writings ever more zealously upheld the ransom as the very center of Christian faith.

The trouble, dear brother, is that you have read into our article things which are not in it. This over-brilliance is a fault common to many of us. Do we not

see it illustrated in all of our experiences with the Word of God? Which of us has not had his principal difficulty along this line of reading into or out of the Word of God enough to confuse us? We cannot, therefore, chide you for misreading our message.

Reading the article in question more carefully you will perceive that it is not discussing the Redemption, but the Sin-Offering, which is a different view of the great transaction. Briefly examining the texts you quote we find: (1) They teach that the death of Christ is the foundation upon which the hope of every man's salvation rests. Whatever blessing ultimately shall come to every man must result from the death of Jesus, however others may subsequently be associated with him in the work. (2) The grand truth that none can ever have eternal life except by relationship with Jesus in no way hinders the Lord from using the Church as his assistant and agent in bringing the world into that blessed state. (3) Truly our Lord is already the propitiation for the Church's sins, because he "appeared in the presence of God for us." It is also true that the satisfaction of justice which he effects will ultimately be extended to all mankind at the close of this age and the opening of the Millennium; but this does not hinder our Lord from accepting the Church as "members of his body" and sacrificing them as such during this antitypical Atonement Day. (4) Our Lord truly gave himself "a ransom for all" eighteen centuries ago, but evidently he has not yet applied the benefits to any except "the household of faith." And meantime what difference does it make to the world if by the Father's plan our Redeemer reckons to adopt the Church as "members of his body" and allows these to participate in the sufferings of Christ in this present time and thus also to share coming glories?

Summing up the matter: We, believers, have no personal standing before God nor share in the sacrifice of the sin-offering. It is only those who are "beheaded," and thus cease to be themselves and are accepted as members of the Anointed One--the Christ--only these share the sufferings or the glory of Christ. Jesus the Head does all the sacrificing. All of the under priests are represented in the High Priest as his members. They all are associated, but the Head is the recognized representative of all.

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page 49

SEMI-MONTHLY
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A.D. 1907--A.M. 6035

CONTENTS

Views from the Watch Tower..... 51
 Current Affairs in Germany..... 51
 "Tongues of Fire" 52
 The Doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ as
 an Essential..... 53
 News from Kingston, Jamaica..... 53
 Take Heed to Yourselves..... 53
 Harvest Work Amongst the Blacks..... 54
 The Oath-Bound Covenant..... 56
 Abraham's Prayer for Sodom..... 59
 Some Interesting Questions--
 Trading with our "Pounds" 63
 Love the Fulfilling of the Law..... 63

page 50

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R3942 : page 50

SHALL WE SING UNITEDLY?

"Many men of many minds," writes the poet; but God's people are striving daily to have "the mind of Christ" and to "all mind the same things." We commend this same course in respect to our hymns. When we meet in One-Day Conventions and General Conventions let us be able to sing unitedly. We now have, prepared at considerable trouble and expense, two hymn books with music: one of these, Hymns of Dawn, containing beyond all dispute 333 of the best of all hymns of all denominations, is supplied in cloth binding, 35 cents, postpaid, about one-fourth the usual price; the other is a choice collection of 54 new hymns, Zion's Glad Songs, at 5 cents, postpaid. Are not these enough? Do we know them all so as to sing them well? Each one, of course, has the liberty to buy and to sing as he may please, but is it expedient to distract with too great variety? We incline to think not; and hence keep in stock and supply only the above described.

page 50

EXTRA COPIES OF MONDAY'S "DISPATCH"

We are privileged to send extra copies of Monday's Pittsburg Dispatch, containing Pastor Russell's sermons, to anyone who is a regular subscriber. Thus many friends at one place can get supplies through one of their number. Such papers, however, require extra wrapping and postage. The following will be the rates:--

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THE PASSOVER MEMORIAL, MARCH 28, 1907

The date for the observance of the Memorial of our Lord's "Last Supper" this year will be Thursday night (after 6 p.m.), March 28th. We trust that our readers in Asia, Africa, Australia and Alaska will get this notice in season and celebrate in unison with us the great event which sealed the Abrahamic or "Everlasting Covenant" for us, and will seal the "New Covenant" for Israel and the whole world, shortly.

WHAT SAY THE SCRIPTURES ABOUT SPIRITISM?

WHO ARE THE SPIRITS IN PRISON? AND WHY ARE THEY THERE?

This booklet is now ready and will be supplied at 10 cents each: wholesale rates 50 cents per dozen are open to all TOWER readers who may desire to circulate these among their friends.

In leatherette binding, 25 cents. Prices include postage.

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Slandorous and nonsensical reports respecting the Editor of this journal and our Society's work, etc., have appeared in various newspapers. Friends are requested on finding such to send us a copy of such papers--marked: not merely a clipping.

Colporteurs will please use our Order blanks and direct letters to "Colporteur Department."

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R3940 : page 51

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

CURRENT AFFAIRS IN GERMANY

ACCORDING to the advices received from the Society's representative in Germany there is a great religious unrest there at the present time. Roman Catholics are stoutly resisting the movement known as "Los von Rom"--i.e., "Away from Rome"--and the tendency of our times to individual thinking on the part of its supporters. Its party in the German parliament--the Reichstag--is now very necessary to the government in connection with the passage of government measures, because the Socialist party has become so strong. Under the patronage of the Emperor, Catholics are proclaiming loudly the duty of loyalty to religion and the government, even though not a great while ago they were quite willing to inveigh against that very same government. The cry now is for the necessity of all religious people uniting in opposition to infidelity and revolutionary parties. Protestants, under similar influences, are taking somewhat the same stand, but decline to be brought too closely into union with the Church of Rome. Thus the question of the hour is held to be outward formalistic religion and patriotism to the government. Under this plea, no doubt, Socialists and Revolutionists will be more and more opposed year by year, and no doubt ourselves, and others considered out of line with the majority of "Orthodoxy," will be similarly brought under the ban, and treated as though we were in some way associated with or responsible for the revolutionary conditions and their program.

Unable to secure legislation desired by him Emperor

William recently dissolved the German Reichstag (Congress) and ordered a fresh election at which a stout contest was made by the three leading parties, one of which, the Social-Democrat, had been too powerful for the Emperor's purposes. It is claimed that the Emperor appealed to the Pope to influence the Catholic vote away from the Socialist party because they were a menace to both Church and State. The election certainly reflects this, for in it the Socialists lost 34 members of the Reichstag. The event was celebrated at Berlin, where noisy crowds saluted the Emperor and subsequently the Crown Prince.

The effect will be to more than ever separate the religious from the Socialists and drive the irreligious to them. Thus we see the cleavage coming along the very lines laid down in prophecy--on the one side "the Beast and his Image and the Kings of the earth and their armies" or supporters, and on the other side the army of anarchy, which unwittingly will as "the Lord's great army" overthrow all present institutions preparatory to the Millennial reign of peace and righteousness. But let us never lose sight of the fact that the "saints," the "elect," have nothing to do with supporting or assisting either side in that awful conflict. It is the Father that shall put all things under the control of the Christ. It will be accomplished by the letting go of natural laws, "the loosing of the winds," which will allow human selfishness on both sides to wreck the present

R3941 : page 51

civilization in a time of trouble such as was not before since there was a nation.

Emperor William at a banquet recently took occasion to emphasize his opposition to all who in any wise think or speak pessimistically, as implying and preaching trouble,--financial, social and religious--as we do. He declares that all pessimists should leave the country, and intimated that only those taking a hopeful view of matters need expect imperial favors. Nevertheless, the newspapers of Germany, religious and secular, are disputing both the accuracy and wisdom of the Emperor's words. They seem to believe that denying the existence of evils will not cure them. They are surely right; the Emperor is surely wrong: nevertheless we may readily imagine how he and others of like mind and political influence, combining with Churchianity, Roman and Protestant, will be ready to go great lengths in crying "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," and in harshly treating those who proclaim the message of the Bible respecting "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" as being at hand.

R3941 : page 52

We are reminded in this connection of the experiences

of Jeremiah with the king and princes of Judah--that time and again he was cast into the dungeon for proclaiming the Word of the Lord respecting approaching calamities.

Spiritism is said to be making considerable progress in Germany, too. Books on the spirit land, proclaiming that the dead are not dead--that all when they seem to die pass to a more complete enjoyment of life --are having wide sale. As already pointed out, Spiritism is bound to have a mighty influence in the next few years in deluding the people: everything is surely well prepared in that direction. The views of Christendom, that the dead are alive, have been thoroughly absorbed by the public; and as now doubt is creating individual thought along religious lines, Spiritism steps to the front, claiming to have the only torch to light the gloom beyond, and many are walking in its false light. It is difficult to know in advance how serious its misleadings may yet become--everywhere throughout Christendom. From Germany also comes confirmation of a report current there that a certain kind of "revival" has sprung up in India, attended with peculiar manifestations of an unseen power--apparently a counterfeit of some of the manifestations in the early Church following Pentecost--speaking with unknown tongues, not leading, however, toward intelligent knowledge of the Lord and his plan, but toward fanaticism.

"TONGUES OF FIRE"

From all parts of the world, but especially from the Pacific coast, come reports of what its friends call a fresh Pentecostal blessing--an outpouring of the holy Spirit, etc., and what its opponents call a religious insanity. The movement is amongst so-called "holiness people" of various sects and parties--"missions," as their meetings are generally styled. People who have been seeking and claiming "divine healing" seem to be among the most susceptible. Amongst these are some who give evidence of deep sincerity and a superficial knowledge of God's Word. Though generally swift to speak and slow to hear, they, through indolence or fear, neglect systematic study of the divine message. They seem to come under the head mentioned by the Prophet (Hosea 4:6), "My people perish for lack of knowledge."

Reports of the movement in various directions seemed so absurd that we declined to believe them, supposing that since they were sent out by the secular press the facts must surely be misrepresented. Now, however, the "flame," as it is called, has reached Pittsburg, where at one of the Christian Alliance Missions we have an ocular demonstration of this

delusion.

What we see here corresponds well with the general reports from elsewhere. The meetings are "bedlam:" everything is confusion, prayers to God are yelled or groaned or barked,--yelped. Now and then someone "gets the blessing" and falls in a trance-like condition on the floor, to remain rigid, perhaps, for hours. Another begins to talk some sort of gibberish interspersed with English. Another in a different guttural mumbles and then gives an interpretation in English. These are said to have the "unknown tongues" of Pentecost; but we remember that foreigners present did recognize those tongues as bona fide and got a gospel message from them.--Acts 2:8.

The people in attendance pay little heed to what is uttered by these "tongues" and their interpretations. Some are simply curious and attend as a free show: others are too engrossed with their desire to have a trance or an "unknown tongue" to do anything else than groan their prayers to God for those "gifts," as evidences of his favor. Frenzied hugging and kissing and rolling on the floor (reported from elsewhere) are amongst the evidences that these poor people are surely under some spirit influence. And it certainly does not appear to be "the spirit of a sound mind."-- 2 Tim. 1:7.

It is quite true that there was confusion at Pentecost, caused by so many speaking at once in foreign languages; but nothing in the record implies insanity or fanaticism: nor could we expect either of such sound logicians as the apostolic epistles show them to have been. On the contrary our experiences corroborate the declaration of St. Paul, that the operation of the holy Spirit of God in our hearts and minds has been favorable to the development of greater soundness of mind, by reason of our heed to the Word and its wisdom, which cometh from above. A WATCH TOWER reader in Los Angeles, Cal., writes that a neighbor woman got this so-called gift of tongues, and that a reputable Chinaman hearing her said that he understood her quite well--that she spoke his dialect of Chinese. Pressed for an interpretation he declined, saying that the utterance was the vilest of the vile.

In our judgment the facts justify the conclusion that these "flames" are of an unholy spirit, of Satan: that he is now producing a poor counterfeit for the deception of a class whom he cannot reach through Spiritism, Christian Science, Hypnotic New Thought nor Higher Critic Evolution theories.

Is it asked, Why would the Lord permit Satan to delude honest souls? We reply, that he has permitted "doctrines of devils" these many centuries amongst the heathen (I Tim. 4:1), some of whom doubtless are also sincere. The time for the binding of Satan is not yet-- though we believe it is very near. (Rev. 20:2.) Doubtless Satan realizes better than we can how the binding

or restraining is coming, and is actively maneuvering to avoid it; while God on the other hand is willing to permit his activity because it can now serve a purpose --a sifting work--which must reach and touch every class and condition of professed Christians everywhere; --to test and prove them. Thus we consider this one of the many delusions of our day. Mark the Apostle's forceful words respecting this day of trial with which

R3941 : page 53

this age ends and the next is ushered in. He says: For this cause "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." Why? "That they [who fall] all might be [thus] condemned"--be manifested as not right, as out of harmony with God--as unfit to be of the "Bride" class. But why so? "Because they received not the truth in the love of it," but "had pleasure in untruth."--2 Thess. 2:10,12.

In other words, the "Present Truth" has been sent hither and thither throughout the bounds of Christendom that, like as a magnet would attract all the particles of steel within the radius of its influence, the Truth might attract all the Israelites indeed, for further schooling and ripening, preparatory to their "change" to Kingdom glory. Meantime, the Lord allows Satan to organize various human agencies, those not of his "very elect," that such may fall farther and farther from the Truth, until finally none will "stand" except the elect, and they "on the sea of glass mingled with fire." (Rev. 15:2.) All others are to fall more or less, through some will subsequently be rescued from the catastrophe--"saved so as by fire."-- I Cor. 3:15.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST AS AN ESSENTIAL

In the North American Review Professor C. A. Briggs, D.D., D.Lit., in an article entitled, "Criticism and Dogma," states as follows:--

"When it is said that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is essential, it is meant that it is essential to the system of doctrine and the Faith of the Christian Church. The Church can no more dispense with that doctrine than it can dispense with the incarnation of Christ himself. It is not, however, essential to the faith or Christian life of individuals. The doctrine may for various reasons be so different to them that they cannot honestly accept it. They may content themselves with the doctrine of the incarnation and refuse to accept any doctrine as to its mode. They may even go so far as to deny the Virgin Birth, and hold to the theory of ordinary generation without accepting the

legitimate consequences of that doctrine. Theologians are not always consequential. Men are responsible for what they believe and teach, not for what others think that they ought logically to believe and teach. The Church may, and in the present situation and circumstances of Christian Theology, ought to tolerate opinions which it cannot endorse.

R3942 : page 53

"Christian dogma is in a process of reconstruction, owing to the partial adoption by theologians of the principle of development. Science and Philosophy are also in a condition of reconstruction and restatement. Confusion of thought is inevitable under these circumstances. The Church, the most stable of all human institutions, can afford to be patient and charitable, and to wait until its scholars have removed the difficulties that in this age envelop Christian dogma. These can only be overcome in the arena of chivalric scholarship, not in ecclesiastical courts ruled by ecclesiastics, who are usually more concerned about the forms of things than about their reality. Christian scholars as a body are not at all dubious as to the Virgin Birth. It is not at all a question of Biblical criticism, but of Christian dogma. They are generously inclined towards those who at present are either doubtful about it, or even disposed to deny it. Biblical and historical scholars are just as decided in its maintenance as dogmatic theologians. For it is a dogma which is inextricably involved in the Christological principle that lies at the basis of Christian dogma and Christian institutions. They cannot possibly recognize that the birth of Christ was by ordinary human generation, for that would be a revival of the Nestorian heresy and be a denial of all the Christian philosophy of the centuries, with all the serious consequences therein involved. It would turn back the dial of Christianity nearly two thousand years: it would break with historical Christianity and its apostolic foundation, and imperil Christianity itself."

NEWS FROM KINGSTON, JAMAICA

DEAR BROTHER:--

You are aware that on January 14th we were visited by a disastrous earthquake which has almost completely demolished the entire city. We are glad to report that no injury has occurred to any of the Lord's people, so far as we have heard, save that one interested friend, who was a constant attendant here, was killed.

A remarkable thing is that many of the heads of business houses were killed, which will cause some

delay in business restoration. Hundreds are under medical treatment, woefully mangled. But what makes me sit in wonder continually is that our meeting hall is the only place of religious worship in the city that is standing and in a condition to be used; and it is all brick like the others, save that the two upper rooms which we occupy are of heavy frame set on top of the lower building, making it more dangerous. Our faith has been greatly strengthened by the experience. The Lord be praised! Yours faithfully,

J. A. BROWNE,--Kingston, Jamaica.

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R3943 : page 53

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES

ST. PAUL'S words, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to shepherd the Church of God, which he hath purchased with the blood of his own Son" (Acts 20:28), were never more worthy of our attention than now. From our vantage point on Zion's watch tower we see clearly that, while the Truth is progressing grandly in all directions, the "Evil Day" is upon us, the time of testing those already blest and enlightened. It is not, therefore, merely a question of who shall be blest with the ear to hear the message of Present Truth, but additionally, "Who shall be able to withstand in that evil day, and having done all to stand" the final tests (Eph. 6:13), and be acclaimed-- "More than conqueror through him who loved us" and bought us with his precious blood.

We perceive the attack of the Adversary, referred to in our caption, in every direction;--the grievous

R3943 : page 54

wolves of error and ambition among "your own selves." We must sound the alarm and tell you that "the hour of temptation" is come--the one for which we have been preparing for the past thirty years. With the knowledge granted us let us not slumber at the critical moment; but soberly and prayerfully and faithfully meet the situation.

Let us remember that our knowledge means an added responsibility, and that it will avail us nothing except as it is combined and active with Love, which is the bond of perfectness, the fulfilling of the divine law or requirement. How many blessings the Lord has granted us, and opportunities to put on the whole armor of God that we might be able to withstand the very trial now upon us!

Wisely did the Apostle first say, "Take heed to yourselves." That is our first responsibility. We should

each first examine our own hearts to see whether we are to any degree moved by jealousies, or ambitions, or any selfish motive. To do this effectively we must not measure ourselves with others, nor yet by our own imperfect standards, but by the Lord's standard--Perfect Love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy being, with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor [and especially thy brother in the Lord] as thyself." Oh! what brotherly-kindness, what tenderness of word and act, what sympathy of thought for each other's weaknesses, what appreciation of each other's better traits, what long-suffering kindness and patient forbearance in love, what care for each other's welfare, rights and liberties, as for our own, this would imply and produce!

"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith!" writes the same Apostle. Doctrinal soundness is very important, but not enough; we must also be "in the faith" in the sense of exercising faith in the Lord--in all of life's affairs, and especially in all the affairs of his Church. If ever we allow expediency to swerve us from the Scriptural program in the affairs of the Church it manifests that we are not "in the faith" as God designed. For confidence in God and his overruling wisdom and power would never permit expediency to say, "Let us do evil that good may follow"--Let us take an unscriptural course for the best interests of the Lord's cause. The faith dictates that to obey God is better than sacrifice, and that he is able to make all things work for good to all who love and serve him.

Dearly Beloved, let us, then, remember that this is our test and now our testing time; and let love for the Lord and his brethren and his Word be constantly in command of our lips, of our conduct and, above all, of our hearts. "If ye do these things ye shall never fail, but so an entrance shall be granted us into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

What is thus true of all, is specially true of those honored with a special stewardship in the Church--the Elders--in this the hour of trial that is upon the whole world and peculiarly upon "the very elect."-- Rev. 3:10.

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R3942 : page 54

HARVEST WORK AMONGST THE BLACKS

QUITE recently Present Truth reached our dear Brother Booth, who for some years has been engaged in missionary work in Central Africa amongst the blacks. So greatly impressed was he with the Scriptural presentation of the DAWN volumes that he made a long journey to Allegheny to confer with us

respecting the possibilities of presenting the harvest message to the Christian converts of Africa, with whom he has been considerably in contact. Brother Booth was the originator, we understand, of the so-called "Industrial Missions" of Central Africa. These established industries amongst the blacks, instructed them in agriculture and other arts of civilization, at the same time bringing the Bible, and the Redeemer and redemption taught therein to the attention of the natives. Several of these missions started by Brother Booth have since passed into the hands of others, and some have come under denominational control.

We informed our dear brother that we, too, were interested in the colored people--year, in all mankind; but that seeing the way of the Lord more particularly than we once did, we no longer feel that the salvation of the world is a responsibility upon our shoulders, but upon the Lord's, where it belongs; and that as we had come to understand his Word we found therein that he had not neglected his responsibility to his creatures, but had made a full provision through Jesus for all the sons and daughters of Adam, and that in due time under the Millennial Kingdom all are to be brought to a knowledge of the Truth. We assured him of our sympathy with mission work and with every kind of good work for the reformation and uplifting of all the members of our race, but that our understanding is that the harvest work differs considerably from a sowing work, a planting work. We explained that the harvest time into which we have entered is in our view designed of the Lord for the ripening or perfecting of character amongst those who are his; that from amongst these the elect number may be completed, and that following their glorification they, with the Master, as the King and Priests of the coming age, will promote the knowledge of the Lord and every good work, and restrain Satan and every evil influence, that every creature may come to know the Redeemer--that every knee may bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN CONVERTS

It was then that Brother Booth surprised us by telling us that if manifestations of Christian love were to be taken as an indication of Christian character (to which we agreed) then he could assure us that there were some as true Christians amongst the blacks of Africa as any he had ever found amongst the whites

R3942 : page 55

anywhere. He surprised us greatly by narratives of his own experiences amongst this simple people of nature and how much of real kindness he had experienced at their hands. Trusting in the Lord, he went without spear or sword or gun over hundreds of miles

amongst savage tribes, some of them cannibals. He found them savage toward their enemies, yet kindly disposed toward those whom they could trust as friends. The white people, however, they did not recognize as friends, and this was his chief difficulty.

They threatened his life, and when asked why, they said, "We know you white men: first you come with the little book and talk peaceful words; then you inform others and they come with guns and kill us and take our property and force us to labor in the carrying out of their plans, so that we become slaves. We do not want you; stay in your own country that your God gave you. Let us keep our country and live in happiness as heretofore." Brother Booth was obliged to tell them that he could not answer for his brethren--that he regretted to say that there was considerable truth in their charges; but that as for himself they could see that he brought no gun, no weapon, but merely the little book, and it had a message in it that would make them happy as it had made him happy. "Kill me if you wish to. If God's time has come for me to die I am ready and willing--perhaps this is the place where God intends I shall die. But let me tell you about the little book and what it says." Thus he would get them to listen to him and to listen to the Scriptural story of sin and how it came, of the death of Christ and its value in the sight of God, and how they all could be partakers of the blessings from that sacrifice, and by turning from sin and giving their hearts to the Lord could have divine joy and peace instead of bitterness and anger and strife.

Brother Booth told us that many of the natives are zealous for knowledge, and that some of them have become very earnest preachers of the Word and quite willing to lay down their lives, if the occasion required, in the service of the Truth so far as they understand it. He told us that in South Africa quite a number of educated negroes are owners and editors of newspapers, having gotten their education in various colleges. He urged that many of these blacks of South Africa and also of Central Africa should be of just the right

R3943 : page 55

condition of heart and mind to receive the glad message of the Millennial morning and the establishment of the reign of righteousness in the hands of the great King and the glorified Church. He says that he himself had felt so depressed by the conditions surrounding him there, and by the thought that all who were not brought to a knowledge and love of the Savior were going to eternal torment--that his mind was greatly distressed, and he felt sure that there was something radically wrong with his message. He had returned from Africa to Scotland in perplexity as to what would be his best course. It was at this time that he came

into contact with some of the friends of the Truth in Scotland and had the DAWNS put into his hands. He besought us to undertake some missionary work on behalf of the poor blacks, amongst whom he has labored for now fifteen years.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that we fell in line with Brother Booth's proposition, inferring that the Lord had guided him to us, and was now directing us respecting another part of the harvest work. The Society accordingly has for a time undertaken Brother Booth's expenses as its missionary to those peoples with whom he is acquainted. He can speak several of their languages, while others he can reach through interpreters, and some in South Africa can read English. He was quite surprised when we informed him that the WATCH TOWER has a regular list of subscribers in Africa to the number of forty--not very many, it is true, but after all quite a good many, everything considered. Brother Booth started on his mission shortly after the first of the year, and by the time our readers get this he will be at work. It will be some time before he will have anything to report, and then it will require a considerable time to reach us. Meantime we have assured our dear brother of the love and sympathy of the Lord's dear people who are rejoicing in Present Truth, and bid him God speed, and pray for the harvest work amongst the savage tribes. Who knows but what there are some true grains of ripening wheat in that far-off land, to whom the Lord would send the present harvest message for their further development and perfecting before they can reach the garner.

NEARER FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST

Already quite a little work is under way amongst the negroes of Jamaica and Porto Rico, as was exhibited in the report recently published in these columns. But Brother Booth's zeal for the black brethren has had the effect of stimulating our interest in them, and the more we reflect on the subject the more deeply interested do we feel in the harvest work amongst these people right at our doors. Brother Booth emphasized the fact that many colored people have great reverence for God and considerable honesty of mind, and that as a rule they are ready to investigate, especially when the presentation is made by the whites, and when they can see consistency of life in the would-be teacher.

We wish to call the attention of the friends in general to this quarter of the harvest field, with the suggestion that in quite a good many of the little gatherings there is more than a sufficiency of talent for the service of the Church as leaders of Berean Studies, etc., and that some might find time and good opportunities for presenting the Divine Plan of the Ages to colored Christians of their vicinity. Would it not be worth while

to visit some of their meetings, and in a wise and kindly manner tell them very briefly something about the end of the age, the dawn of the Millennium, and the Kingdom that then is to be established in the earth, etc., and to proffer a lecture on the Chart of the Ages if they desire. We believe that invitations of that kind would be frequently accepted, and doubt not that some amongst the blacks would respond earnestly. Our

R3943 : page 56

hopes along this line are supported by the fact that in various parts of our country Berean Bible Study classes have already been started amongst the colored friends. Indeed, of a number of these dear brethren we could surely say that, in rightly dividing the Word and clearly presenting it to others, very few amongst the whites will be found their superiors. We could also say of them that, so far as their knowledge goes, their standard of integrity and morality seems to be equally high with them as with the white brethren. Our suggestion is that the white brethren shall seek to carry the message to the blacks as opportunity may afford. This does not signify that the colored brethren should desist from serving those of their own race and color in their own localities. We will be glad to cooperate according to our judgment of the Lord's will with any, either whites or blacks, who desire to engage in this section of the harvest field.

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R3944 : page 56

THE OATH-BOUND COVENANT

--GENESIS 15:1,5-16.--FEBRUARY 24.--

Golden Text:--"He believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness."

IN our last lesson we noted the unwise choice made by Lot, the result of which was his closer association than was necessary with the ungodly of Sodom. Additionally it exposed him to the same difficulties to which his neighbors, who were not under the special providence of God, were exposed. It appears that Sodom and the surrounding cities of the Jordan valley had for some time been paying tribute to Chedorlaomer, whose capital city was several hundred miles further north. When they ceased to pay tribute Chedorlaomer sent an army--composed in part of recruits from various subject kings on the way--to take possession of Sodom as instead of the tribute money. Together with spoil of gold and silver and other valuables numerous captives were taken, of whom to make slaves. Lot, his family, his servants and his property were taken, sharing in all the

burdens of the Sodomites. We can well imagine his discouragement and self-condemnation--that he had not only experienced vexation in his new home country by reason of the unrighteousness of his neighbors and the contaminating influence upon his family, but now he was sharing with them in the vicissitudes of his present condition, whereas had he remained with Abraham, his uncle, matters might have been different: evidently God had a special protecting care over Abraham--he was not captured nor despoiled.

Although Abraham was noted as a man of peace, we find him very loyal to principle in connection with this trouble. Two of the captured ones escaped and brought word to Abraham of the capture of the Sodomites, with Lot and his family. The man of God was not long in deciding respecting his proper course. Summoning all of his servants capable of assisting in such an emergency, 318 in number, he armed them and set out for the deliverance of his nephew. We are not to suppose that the army which captured the Sodomites was a large one, even though the names of four kings are introduced in connection with it. This was not a very long time after the flood, and the entire population was not as yet very large. The suggestions of higher critics about vast armies, great cities, etc., at this time, are out of harmony with the facts--first, the shortness of time after the flood; and, second, the ability of Abraham, with 318 men, to even make an attack and disconcert and confuse the army and deliver Lot and the Sodomites and all their goods. These facts all agree that the cities, the armies, the kingly powers of that day, were very meager in comparison to what we have in mind when we use similar terms in our day. In all probability the armies of the four kings combined did not exceed a thousand men, and the entire population of Sodom probably much less. The building of a city in those times would correspond more nearly to the building of a fort in our day. Thus, for instance, we read that Cain went to the land of Nod and built him a city--a house or villa for himself and his family.

Abraham's heroism in the matter was fully matched by his generosity, for not a particle of the spoil would he take for himself. The characters which the Lord loves and chooses are those which are unselfish, generous as well as just. In these respects Abraham showed that he had a considerable measure of the original image of God still remaining with him, not obliterated by the fallen conditions through which himself and his ancestors as members of the race of Adam had passed. On the other hand we see in Lot a less noble character naturally, a less strong character. This is evidenced afresh in the fact that even after this experience and deliverance he continued to reside in Sodom, to choose the life of luxury and ease, unfavorable to himself and his family, morally and religiously. Abraham chose the better part: his God was his friend, in whom he delighted; and such experiences in life as would best enable him to comply with the divine arrangements respecting him were the ones that he chose, and to the attainment of which he pressed his energies.

REPETITION OF THE COVENANT

We have already referred to the fact that God agreed to make a covenant with Abraham while he was still living in the land of Chaldea, and that the covenant itself was consummated and made applicable to Abraham from the time that he set his foot upon the land of promise in obedience to the divine call. But for his encouraging and the strengthening of his already great faith, God repeated this promise over and over in different terms. (See Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1,5,18; 17:1-10; 18:19; 21:12; 22:16-18.) There was in fact but one covenant, but various statements of it.

In our present lesson we have one of these repetitions of the covenant with some peculiar features. (V. 1.) In a vision the Lord assured him that he should not fear, that his God would be his shield and his exceeding great reward. Quite probably a fear had come to Abraham, in connection with the deliverance of his nephew Lot, that the kings whom he had ignominiously defeated would return better prepared, better on guard, and wreak their vengeance upon him, and that thus he might be interrupting, interfering, with the

R3944 : page 57

promise God had made that he and his posterity should inherit the land of Canaan. The declaration, "I am thy shield," would set at rest any doubts or fears along this line, as we elsewhere read, "When he giveth quietness who then can make trouble?" If the Lord would shield him how then could all the kings of earth do him harm or interrupt the divine program for blessing him and his posterity? The other statement is also worthy of notice: "I am thy exceeding great reward." Already he was the recipient of God's favors, rewards for his faith and obedience, and the promises also were in the line of rewards. But the statement here made went beyond all this and enumerates a still higher, grander truth, namely, that as Abraham had given himself fully to God, the latter now declares that in a sense he would give himself to Abraham, he would be his reward--to have his friendship, his fellowship, his love, his care, would be the highest and best reward that could possibly be given to Abraham for his fidelity.

And are not these precious promises applicable to the spiritual seed of Abraham? Is not this the essence of the Apostle's declaration to the Church--"All things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's"? Again we hear the Apostle saying, "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. 8:33.) Again we hear the Master's word to the same class, "The Father himself loveth you." (John 16:27.) O, what rest and comfort it brings to our hearts, amongst the trials and vicissitudes of life, to realize in the depths of our hearts that these are not merely words but truths. But only as we are able to realize an obedient faith are we able to apply these gracious promises to ourselves or

to rest therein. This same thought is expressed respecting Abraham (v. 6), "He believed in the Lord." The word in the original signifies more than mere belief; it signifies what only believers can fully comprehend, viz., a rest of faith in God.

"HE COUNTED IT FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS"

At first we are inclined to say, How strange it is that God should count our faith for anything--how simple, how easy a matter faith is! Why should it be valuable in God's sight? But the more we come to know ourselves the more we come to value faith, to realize that it is a scarce commodity in the world and even amongst Christians, professed believers. Under some conditions faith is very easy; indeed to disbelieve would be difficult. After this manner we understand nearly all the conditions of the Millennial age will be framed, so that the world in general will find it difficult to disbelieve in God, his power, his justice, his love. Then the reward will be merely for the obedient, though some faith will doubtless be required as well. Now, on the contrary, the reward is merely on account of faith, though what obedience is possible is required, too. "According to thy faith be it unto thee," was our Master's expression, and it represents a general principle of divine dealing now.

God is now seeking for a faith-full people, and declares that those whom he will find will be peculiar in this respect from the majority; not many great, not many wise, not many learned according to the course of this world have and exercise this faith--chiefly the poor, rich in faith, may be heirs of the Kingdom. Let us seek to cultivate continually faith in the Lord, in his Word, in his providential care. This is not trusting in the creeds and the theories of men, which might be merely credulity, but trusting in the Word of the Lord, which liveth and abideth forever. As God counted such faith to Abraham as so much of righteousness, so he counts to us of this Gospel age, who are children of Abraham by faith. We are not righteous in a full, perfect, complete sense of that word. Even with our hearts turned to the Lord, and with the best of intentions, we cannot do the things that we would; but as to those who can exercise faith, and who do exercise it in harmony with divine righteousness to the best of their ability, God will count their efforts as though they are perfect! How gracious an arrangement! How lovingly we should show our appreciation by still greater faith and still harder endeavors to walk in the path of righteousness which faith dictates.

THE STARS OF HEAVEN, THE SANDS OF THE SEASHORE

In other statements of this promise or covenant God directed Abraham's mind to the stars and to the sand of the seashore and to the dust of the earth as illustrations of the numbers of his posterity. As yet Abraham had no child: every testimony of this kind was therefore to him a testing of his faith, a suggestion that he should inquire first for a

beginning of these matters; and as days and years passed by the testing of faith was increased, yet to our joy we find that Abraham was full of faith in these promises, never doubting the power of God in some way to accomplish all that he had given him reason to hope for. Here we find a lesson for ourselves. Other promises have been made to us, some of which seem to be utterly impossible of attainment. Shall our faith stagger and shall we begin to doubt? or shall we hold fast to the Word of the Lord, nothing wavering, nothing doubting? In order to do so we must discriminate clearly between the words of man and the Word of God, so that we may reject the words of man, resting nothing upon their promises, but our entire weight of trust must rest upon the Word of the Lord.

How solicitous this should make us to have before our minds clearly and distinctly just what things God has promised to them that love him. In accord with this fact we find that God's most earnest and loyal children are continually desiring to grow in grace and to grow in knowledge of him through his Word and through his providences, and that more and more they are cutting and drifting away from the creeds and theories of men, those which appear to be good and those which are manifestly vile, evil, injurious. The Scriptural statement is, respecting all such things, "If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. 8:20.) Hence the Scriptures again say that those who have nothing but their own dreams and fancies to preach may do so, but those who have the Word of the Lord should preach it and not themselves nor their fancies and dreams.--Jer. 23:28.

In the light of the New Testament we may see more in these various promises than Abraham or others not thus enlightened by the holy Spirit. We can see that the spiritual seed of Abraham, Christ and the Church, are represented in this simile of his seed being as the stars of heaven, and we also see that the other part of the statement--that his seed shall be as the sand of the seashore--will have a fulfilment in Abraham's natural posterity, the Hebrew people,

and in that still larger class of all nations referred to in the statement, "I have constituted thee a father of many nations." (Gen. 17:5.) How this deeper, clearer view of the promise enlarges the horizon of our eyes of understanding, and enables us to grasp with more and more distinctness the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God, which is yet to be manifested to every creature of our race, giving all opportunity of becoming children of Abraham --of full faith in and obedience to God. For that glorious opportunity the Apostle declares the whole creation is groaning and travailing, waiting until now--waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, and, more than this, waiting

until the sons of God are selected, tested, accepted and then manifested in glory.

THE INHERITANCE OF CANAAN

It is proper to speak of an earthly and a heavenly Canaan, but it is a mistake common to too many to apply all the promises of God that are yet future to the heavenly. There are earthly promises still unfulfilled, and one of these is referred to in our lesson (v. 7). The Lord here distinctly informed Abraham again that he intended to give that land to him and his posterity. That there might be no doubt as to the literalness of this, the Lord said to Abraham on another occasion, Lift up now thine eyes and look to the north and south and east and west, for all the land thou seest to thee will I give it and to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. (Gen. 13:14; 17:8.) How could the land Abraham saw be the heavenly city, which neither he nor we have ever seen? To make the matter doubly sure we have the word of Stephen on the subject (Acts 7), who declares that it was the literal land, and yet that Abraham had not received so much as to set his foot upon, but that he had faith that he would get that land, and Stephen also had faith that it would ultimately be given to Abraham and his posterity. Our faith is and should be the same. Abraham is to have a grand portion, and the land of Palestine is to be an element of his blessing and inheritance. True, we read that Abraham dwelt in tents and not in a city, with walls, etc., for his protection; he was thus a pilgrim and a stranger, with no continuing city. He would not, like Lot, live in Sodom, for he desired a better country, even a heavenly. That is to say, he was waiting for the time that God intended that he should inherit this promise, anticipating the establishment of God's Kingdom at the second coming of our Lord, and preferring the solidity, the establishment, the security of that city, thinking the security of any earthly city of small account. And we see that in this he judged rightly. He was safer where he was, with God for his companion and divine promises for the walls of his salvation, than he could have been in any earthly city. Surely the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God, will be established with great power and glory, and nothing shall injure and destroy in all the Lord's holy Kingdom. Then Abraham's desires and anticipations will have been realized, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

If we would examine the various promises in detail they are that the land of Canaan should be the heritage of Abraham and of his seed forever; that he should have a son who would be his heir and inherit the promises; that his seed, descendants, would ultimately be as the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven, innumerable; that he should be the father of a great nation; that he should be the father of many nations, and that through him all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

"WHEREBY SHALL I KNOW?"

Abraham had already testified his faith in God's promises in a general way. He did not doubt them, but when now the Lord reiterated the fact that the land was to be his, he thought it not improper to ask for some word indicating the way in which the blessing should come--"O, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? What outward signs and evidences will help my faith to grasp these great promises you have made to me and which I thoroughly believe?" It was no more a sin for Abraham to ask the Lord to confirm and strengthen his faith than it would be for us to ask the same for ourselves. And God seems ever ready to help the trustful. How many assistances to faith he gives us without chiding when we come to him in a trustful and faithful attitude of mind. This is illustrated in our day by the difference in the Lord's treatment of those who look skeptically upon the Scriptures, the Bible, and those who look upon it from the standpoint of faith. The first mentioned find plenty to establish their skepticism; all the higher critics, the educated of the world, are in their company. On the other hand, those who are looking at the Word from the standpoint of faith and trust are blessed; to them it is opened--"He that seeketh findeth."

God at once gave Abraham his oath in confirmation of the promise. By a peculiar method God bound himself to Abraham by what is termed the "covenant of blood." A full description of it is given in the lesson: a heifer of three years, a she-goat of three years, a ram of three years, a turtle dove and a young pigeon were sacrificed, and the Lord represented himself as passing between the parts of these sacrificed animals, and was thus swearing by a covenant or sacrifice of life-blood to the promise he had given. The Lord was represented by a lamp of fire.

Then came the answer to Abraham's question, "Whereby shall I know? Give me some of the particulars relating to the matter of how my posterity shall inherit. Give me a view of the future." The Lord did give Abraham a glance into the future of his people, saying, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years." This need not be understood to mean that Israel would be in bondage for four hundred years more that they would be afflicted all the years they would be in a strange land. Rather the thought seems to be that not until four hundred years would his posterity return to that land to inherit it according to the promise; that in the meantime they would suffer rigors, hardships, be in servitude, suffer affliction. The punishment upon the nation holding them in servitude is also mentioned--the Lord would judge them, and after four hundred years the seed of Abraham would come out of bondage with great substance and very rich. It would be in the fourth generation, we are told, that his descendants would return to Canaan, and an explanation of why the long delay is given in part in the statement, "The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full": as though

the Lord had said to Abraham, The Amorite has a prior hold upon this land, but I know the outcome with them, that they will get worse and worse and that eventually it will be the course of justice toward them to expel them--but not yet; the time for the change is not ripe. So long as they follow a reasonable course they will be permitted to remain, but when their cup of iniquity is full the land shall then be turned over to your posterity forever.

Abraham was not told how long it would be before his posterity would go into that captivity which would end in four hundred years at the fourth generation; he was merely told that it would not occur during his lifetime--"Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age"; none of these calamities can come upon your posterity while you still live. We remember the fulfilment of this prediction; that for a time Abraham's posterity

dwelt in Canaan as he himself had done, in tents, without seeking an earthly city or government. We remember that the famine drove them out of Canaan and they went down into Egypt as the guests of Pharaoh and Joseph, Abraham's grandson, who was then governor of Egypt through a divine arrangement. We remember that while matters went peaceably for a time, by and by Joseph died and Pharaoh died, and then began one hundred and ninety-eight years of servitude and affliction, which continued until the Lord sent Moses and delivered Israel at the close of the 400 years mentioned in our lesson.

LESSONS FOR THE SPIRITUAL SEED

We may be sure that the horror of great darkness and the coming down of the fires to devour the sacrificed carcasses represented more than merely the dark picture of the servitude of Abraham's natural seed before they should go back to Palestine. We may be sure that the Lord, who made this covenant, had more in mind the spiritual seed than the natural. The Apostle Paul tells us so, for referring to this Oath-Bound Covenant he declares, "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the unchangeableness of his promise, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable [unchangeable] things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor to our souls both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the vail." (Heb. 6:17-19.) The holy Spirit here, through the Apostle's pen, informs us that this oath was given to Abraham, not solely on his own account, as might appear, but specially on account of us, the spiritual heirs, the heirs of promise. The Apostle points out that Christ is the great inheritor, and that we who are Christ's are joint-heirs

with him in this covenant promise, and that thus through Christ and the Church the entire promise will be made effective to Abraham and his natural seed as well as to all the families of the earth.

The darkness of that hour suggests to us the sufferings of this present time, the fiery furnace of affliction, the "better sacrifices" established in and upon the merit of our dear Redeemer's death and the ultimate great blessing that is to follow. Now what we have is still a hope. Abraham is dead; his natural posterity have failed to attain the blessing; the higher favor secured by our Lord Jesus through his own obedience unto death has been extended to the faithful of the Jews and the faithful of every nation, whom the Father has drawn through his grace and truth, and yet we have this promise as a hope, but it is anchored to Christ, who is within the veil, a spirit being. By faith we realize a relationship to him, and that the darkness and suffering of this present time will soon be ended; by faith we realize that the glorious things which God hath in reservation for them that love him far more than overbalance the trials and difficulties of the pilgrim journey; by faith we see that as soon as the entire body of the Anointed One shall be completed and glorified, then a great blessing is due to begin with Israel after the flesh, and to extend through them also to every creature. Ah, how gracious is our Lord's provision! How kind for him to give us such a strong consolation through not only his repeated testimony of the truthfulness of this great matter, but also of his oath which confirms, secures, makes positive every element of the promise! What manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness! What more could the Lord say to us than he has said?

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R3946 : page 59

ABRAHAM'S PRAYERS FOR SODOM

--GENESIS 18:16-33.--MARCH 3.--

Golden Text:--"Men ought always to pray and not to faint."--Luke 18:1.

THERE are several very interesting matters connected with this lesson. Abraham had been living in Canaan and Lot in Sodom for a considerable time, when, at the noon hour, three men one day appeared to Abraham--strangers. He was prompt to show them hospitality, and Sarah his wife joined. The Apostle evidently referred to this incident in the words, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for some thereby have entertained angels unawares." (Heb. 13:2.) Present-day conditions render such hospitality less necessary, especially in cities where public boarding-houses and hotels are expected to care for the strangers. There is danger, however, that the blessing which

goes with hospitality is to a large extent missed by a considerable number of people. While the modern methods have some advantages, the general tendency of all of them is toward greater selfishness--neglect of our neighbor, whom the Lord would have us love as ourselves--not neglecting to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith.--Gal. 6:10.

To whatever extent these divine injunctions are disregarded we are in danger of losing a blessing, of failing to cultivate generosity, and, on the contrary, cultivating selfishness. God is the great Giver "from whom cometh every good and perfect gift"; and in proportion as his children would return to his image they must cultivate his spirit of benevolence, generosity, kindness, helpfulness--especially to the poor and the needy and the strangers. We are not wishing to suggest the receiving of any and every person

R3946 : page 60

into the home, which might be a very dangerous practice; but we do urge that the changed conditions of our time be not allowed to make our hearts hard, selfish and unthoughtful as respects the interests of our friends or neighbors, and the stranger. We cannot afford to do so, for "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his," and this would mean the loss of those things which God hath in reservation for them that love him.

THE LORD AND TWO ANGELS

The three strange men, Abraham afterwards learned, were angels, one of them the special messenger of Jehovah. We feel confident that this one was the Logos, the Only Begotten One, through whom the Father's power was exercised, so that by him all things were made that were made. (John 1:1.) We are clearly to distinguish between our Lord's appearance here as a man and the appearance of his two companions, the angels, as men, and our Lord's subsequent appearance in the world as the man Christ Jesus. The two were totally different. In the first case the spirit nature was retained, and a human body was merely created and used temporarily for a special purpose, just as our Lord after his resurrection as a spirit being appeared in various forms as a man, but was not really a man. When the due time came for the redemption of Adam and his race it was necessary that our Lord should become a man--perfect, complete as was father Adam in his original creation--"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." When he thus became a man, or as another Scripture expresses it, "was made flesh" (John 1:14), it meant the complete laying aside of the spirit nature before enjoyed--a change or transmutation to another nature, the human.

This was necessary, because it was a man who had sinned, and because the divine law required a man's life for a man's life as the ransom price. But no such transmutation was necessary for the work mentioned in our lesson.

The Lord and his two angelic companions could have appeared to Abraham as to Moses as a flame of fire in a burning bush, or as the bright angel appeared to Daniel, or as an angelic form with less glory and brightness; but God was dealing with Abraham according to faith--he wished him to learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Hence the angels appeared as strange men and were entertained as such, and Abraham's hospitality was demonstrated and became a lesson to all the children of God. Furthermore, the faith of both Abraham and Sarah was tested on this occasion by the Lord's predicting the birth of Isaac shortly, to the amusement of Sarah, who was then old and who doubted, and to the confirmation of Abraham's faith in the promise already given him and trusted in for twenty-five years without sign of accomplishment.

THE CRY OF SODOM

Still hospitable, Abraham accompanied his visitors, whom he had now discerned to be celestial beings appearing in human form. As they moved in the direction of Sodom the Lord is represented as holding a colloquy with himself as to the propriety of intimating to Abraham what might be expected as a judgment upon Sodom, of whose wickedness Abraham certainly was aware. We are given to understand that the fact that Abraham thus far had proven faithful, and that to him belonged the ultimate promise of the blessing of all the families of the earth, was one reason why he was informed respecting the fate of Sodom, "For I have known him [become intimate with him, made a covenant with him, revealed myself to him], to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment;

R3947 : page 60

that the Lord may bring upon him that which he has spoken of him." Thus we see by this indirect teaching that there is method in the Lord's revelation. Matters are made known to his people not merely to satisfy curiosity, but especially because they are in relationship to the Lord and because they are to learn certain lessons in connection with their experiences of life that may be helpful to them in the ultimate work to which they have been called.

In this case, we remember that Abraham had the promise that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, and this included the Sodomites as well, as we shall see later. Abraham then, believing the Word of the Lord, had a right to expect that in some way or other, either then or in the future, he and his posterity would have to do with righteous judgment upon the Sodomites. Besides, the Lord is pleased to have those who are in harmony with him know the equity, the justice of all his dealings. "Come, let us reason together," shows us this principle. (Isa. 1:18.) But the Lord never reasons with any except those who have faith in him and trust in his promises. These are the truly wise,

of whom it is written, "The wise shall understand [matters as they become due], but none of the wicked shall understand" (Dan. 12:10); and again, "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him, and he will show them his covenant."--Psa. 25:14.

Explaining his mission the Lord declared that a great cry had come up to heaven from Sodom and that he was about to investigate, which implied that forbearance had ceased to be of avail and that the time for Sodom's punishment was at hand, and so Abraham understood the matter.

We are not to suppose that merely rumors of matters reached the Lord, and then special investigating committees were sent, but rather that this affair was stated in simple language, so that Abraham and all who have read the record since might know that the Lord takes full cognizance of the affairs of earth, that he does not ignore our conditions, and that while he is plenteous in mercy, and long-suffering and patient, he nevertheless "will not always chide, neither hold back his anger forever": a time of retribution shall come.

This is the same thought to which the Apostle Peter draws our attention in connection with the end of this Gospel age and the trouble which will then be precipitated upon the world of mankind. He represents God as having great mercy, long suffering and willingness, that all might turn unto him and live. Nevertheless he shows that a change of dispensation will come, that justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and that all who will not obey that great Prophet shall be ultimately destroyed. (Acts 3:23). In this connection the New Testament refers to Sodom and its sister cities as illustrations of the fact that God will not always chide. We read that the calamity which came upon the cities of the plain were set forth as an example, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"--[utter destruction, not eternal torment]. (Jude 7.) Thus eventually God will destroy all evil doers with an "everlasting destruction [not preservation in torment or otherwise]

R3947 : page 61

from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power."
--2 Thess. 1:9.

LOVE IN ABRAHAM'S CHARACTER

This one little incident in Abraham's life shows us something of the loving benevolence of his heart, and causes us to love and appreciate him more than ever. The intimation that judgment upon Sodom was near would upon a cruel and loveless heart have suggested a very different course from that pursued by Abraham. Such would have said, "Well, that is an awfully wicked community; they certainly deserve all you could give them; they could not be worse. I told my nephew Lot that he was making a mistake in going to live with such a deplorable set, and having his family intermingle with them; it will serve them all just right whatever kind of punishment you mete out to them."

But Abraham was not at all of this disposition: his heart at once went out in sympathy, and benevolently he surmised that although the plain was notoriously wicked there might at least be fifty righteous persons there--not righteous in the absolute sense of being perfect, but in a relative or accommodated sense of doing right to the best of their ability. (Rom. 8:4.) Abraham had the spirit of a mediator: he said to himself, God has been wonderfully gracious to me every way, and now that he has opened this subject to me I will make bold to tell him of my heart-sympathy for the people, and to express a hope that he will be generous to them. Then he adds, "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous in the city, wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

If these words surprise us--to think that Abraham would dare to call in question the righteousness of the Lord --we should remember that he did not have the blessed advantage that we possess, namely, of the guidance of the Word of God and the enlightenment of the holy Spirit, whereby the Lord's people since Pentecost have been begotten again and granted insight into the deep things of God. We may indeed esteem that this was Abraham's way of putting a question to the Lord rather than criticising him--"If you would destroy the righteous with the wicked, show no difference, would it be just? Lord, show me how this would be just? surely you would do right. I would like to see how justice would be compatible with the course I understand you to have in mind."

PARALLELS IN OUR EXPERIENCES

Similar questions come to us now. Financial disasters come, and probably as often affect the righteous as well as the wicked; storms and tempests do injury to their interests; indeed, sometimes the Lord seems not only not to show favor to the righteous, but, if anything, permits, as in Job's case, more peculiar disasters to fall to their lot. Under the instructions of the great Teacher and his various assistants, the apostles, we have learned that our interests as New Creatures are sometimes best served by difficulties in the flesh, and that God's promise that all things shall work together for good to them that love him and are called according to his purpose, is true. The Lord supervises the experiences of his faithful, so that these afflictions shall seem but light, and shall work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory as New Creatures, in the life to come.

Abraham's love of righteousness and sympathy for all who desired to do right was manifested in this petition. It suggests to us that God, in choosing him as one through whom some of his blessings should flow to the world of mankind in due time, made a good choice. We may be sure also

that all who will be associated with Christ in his Millennial Kingdom, either as members of the Bride class on the Spirit plane, or as members of the great company, or of the ancient worthy class of princes (Psa. 45:16), must all have such a broad benevolence and desire to do good and to favor the righteous in every way, else they would not be fit for the great work to be entrusted to them.

And as we have noted the character which God chose in Abraham, we may feel sure that the calling and drawing of the Father are chiefly if not exclusively to the same class of benevolent hearts. We cannot say that God has not drawn some very selfish persons into close fellowship with himself, and that none of this class will ever attain to a share in the Kingdom itself or in its work; but we may surmise that this would be very nearly the truth, "The liberal soul shall be made fat." The stingy, the selfish, the ungenerous, we incline to think, will not be drawn, not be called to a participation in the Kingdom. Not that any of us have anything whereof to boast in the way of generosity --not that the grace of God is not able to effect a wonderful transformation from selfishness to generosity--but because those who are most selfish have proportionately less of an eye to see and less of an ear to hear of the message of God's mercy and grace and boundless goodness, and therefore will be less in sympathy with the various features of the divine plan as respects the present and the coming age and its work. So that as a measure of love would seem to be indispensable to our drawing, we see most assuredly that a full development of love is absolutely necessary to our attaining the prize of our high calling.

GROWING IN GRACE, IN MERCY, IN LOVE

The Lord answered Abraham that if there were fifty righteous, well-intentioned people in Sodom it would not be destroyed, and Abraham perceived that he was not more just nor more generous than the Lord. But as he thought over the matter it occurred to him that there might perhaps be one or two less than fifty, and so he asked if the city might be spared if there were only forty-five. The reply was, Yes: the Lord was still as benevolent or more benevolent than Abraham: he was merely finding out the goodness of the Lord. His own courage increased, the spirit of love and benevolence having begun to operate, and he queried of the Lord whether now forty would secure mercy upon the city. The answer was, Yes. Abraham had not yet touched the bottom in seeking to measure the Lord's goodness. Step by step he increased his request. Would it be spared for thirty? Then would it be spared for twenty? until finally he asked the Lord if he would spare the city for ten. In every case the answer was, Yes. In every case the Lord was proven to be no less just, no less generous, than his servant. He had not yet been blessed as we have

been with the anointing of the eyes of his understanding to an appreciation of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God, which passeth all understanding.

There is a lesson for us in all of this--a lesson that we should be more and more like our Father which is in heaven, whose message is, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy"; and again, "If ye do not from the heart forgive those who trespass against you, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."--Matt. 5:7; Mark 11:26.

THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S MERCY

Abraham's solicitude was not for the wicked but for the righteous, and so our sympathies should be with all who in every place love righteousness and hate iniquity--to do them good, to serve their interests, to render them assistance, doing good to all men, especially to the household of faith. Abraham's prayers were not for the wicked but for the righteous.

"Shall the righteous suffer as the wicked?" was his plea. It is to be remembered, however, that some who now pray for the wicked do so under the misconceptions handed down from the "dark ages," that the wicked are not destroyed, but preserved either in a purgatory of suffering or an eternity of torture. This ungodly, unscriptural, unreasonable thought had not yet been introduced to the world; the plain word death still meant death, and the hope for a future was that of a resurrection of the dead in God's due time, and under more favorable conditions than in the present--when God's Kingdom would be in power, in control.

When Abraham subsequently heard the result of the disaster--that only his nephew Lot was found a righteous man, and that the Lord delivered the one from destruction, and delivered on his account some who were not as worthy of his favor, members of his family, it must have brought a blush to his cheek--to think that he had questioned the justice of God in supposing that he was about to destroy, with the wicked in the city, as many as fifty righteous when here he beheld God's loving mercy even to the extent of delivering the one righteous person and some of his dear ones. Thus it is with us all: we are finding continually that the "heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind";--that in our poor, imperfect, fallen condition we have no measures that will reach to those lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God, which passeth all understanding. Truly, as the Word declares, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my plans loftier than your plans."

STILL NEW BEAUTIES SEEN

While our minds are contemplating the glories of God in connection with this incident of the destruction of Sodom, let us remember that now he has shown us a still deeper degree of sympathy and love in his provision for the whole world of mankind through the great Redeemer, Abraham's son, our Lord. What more do we see? Ask the Lord himself

and hearken to his answer, "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you"--of Bethsaida and Chorazin and Capernaum. What is this? A day of judgment? Is not the judgment of Sodom past? Yes, truly they were declared of the Lord unworthy of life and were cut short. To quote the words of inspiration, They were haughty, they neglected the poor and the needy and committed abomination, and the Lord took them away from life in the great catastrophe which came upon their city "as he saw good." (Ezek. 16:49,50.) That our Lord had these very people of Sodom in his mind is evidenced by his own words, "fire came down from God out of heaven and destroyed them all." They had a day of judgment and now met their doom and were made an example of, illustrating God's indignation against all unrighteousness, and his will that all evil-doers shall be destroyed. What then did our Lord mean by referring to a day of judgment future? Will they be judged again?

We answer, Yes. They will be judged again, not in the sense of punishing them a second time for their evil deeds--they have already suffered for those. The promised day of judgment means a fresh time of trial pending. But how can this be? Is God not satisfied with his previous judgment respecting this people? Is he not satisfied respecting his decision concerning Adam and the entire race--that none are fit for eternal life because of the impairment of sin, because under the sentence of death?

"A RANSOM FOR ALL, TO BE TESTIFIED"

Ah! the key to this promise of a judgment day in the future for the world of mankind, including the Sodomites, lies in the fact that by divine arrangement "Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man"--"gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Thus we see that he paid the penalty for the Sodomites and for all the rest of us--the death penalty. Hence God's original sentence or judgment, which would have meant the everlasting destruction of us all, has been met, has been satisfied. It was from this standpoint that God spoke to Abraham in advance about the coming day of judgment, and predicted that then Abraham's seed, Christ, would bless all the families of the earth. It was not explained to Abraham how divine justice would be met and the sinner released through a ransom. This we see because it is in the past, and, more clearly than he, we may understand, guided by the Apostle's words, that "God hath appointed a day [the Millennial age] in the which he will judge the world in righteousness [grant the world a fair trial that will take cognizance of these weaknesses and frailties through the fall] by that man whom God hath ordained"--Jesus and his Church, his Bride.--Acts 17:31.

From this standpoint of present truth, unfolding of the divine plan, how we perceive the riches of God's grace and loving kindness, not only toward us who have accepted of his favor through Christ and received of his holy Spirit

as his servants and handmaidens, but his proposed blessing in due time upon the world of mankind in general, the majority of whom are in the great prison-house of death, of which Jesus has the key (Rev. 1:18), that in due time the holy Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh--that all the blind eyes may be opened and all the deaf ears unstopped, to the glory of God and for the assistance of all mankind, who, under those favorable conditions, will turn wholly and completely to the Lord to serve him with full purpose of heart--and as for the remainder who will not so do, after all this opportunity, they shall be utterly destroyed from amongst the people.--Acts 3:23.

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R3948 : page 63

SOME INTERESTING QUESTIONS

TRADING WITH OUR "POUNDS"

Question.--In a recent article in the WATCH TOWER you interpret the Parable of the Pounds and say that the "pound" that is given to each of the servants is Justification. How then can the pound be taken away from the unfaithful servant and be given to the most faithful one? Is it possible to thus transfer Justification?

Answer.--Possibly we should have been more explicit in the article you refer to. We probably left too much for inference. We should have explained in detail that while what the Lord gives to each servant is Justification, the effect of that gift is the possession by the servant of special opportunities as a justified person that he would not have had without. Suppose the ten persons of the parable presented themselves for service --desiring to be the servants of the nobleman-- desiring him to grant them some opportunity for rendering him service. Suppose that in order to be recognized as his servants and to be able to trade at all it was necessary for them to receive and wear a livery or costume provided by the nobleman. The gift of the costume would be the acceptance of them as servants and constitute their opportunity for serving him.

So it is with us: However much we may desire to be the Lord's servants we are imperfect, weak through the blemishes of the flesh, through our fallen nature. We are incapable of doing anything in the Lord's service that would be acceptable until first of all he justifies us. This all-important justification places every servant of God on the same footing in relationship to him and his service--each one justified reckoned as being a perfect man from the divine standpoint--all his blemishes are fully covered by the precious merit of our

Redeemer, the Nobleman. So long as we wear this livery (Justification) we have opportunity in God's sight of rendering acceptable service; and since he will count to us not according to the flesh but according to the spirit, mind or heart's desires, therefore the one who has least as respects his natural talents has the same standing before God as the one who has the most, because both are justified or made equal and right as perfect men, reckonedly. This, then, is the "pound" that is thus given to each one who enters

R3949 : page 63

the Lord's service. It is the same in every case. Nothing else that we have is common and equal--talents, opportunities, educational advantages, etc., are all variant, as well as physical and mental capabilities. Only from this standpoint of God's reckoning us perfect through Christ have we in any sense of the word a "pound" apiece to use in the divine service.

Each one during his life time is to use his pound, his opportunity secured through his justification. Each must trade with his "pound," must exchange it, if he would make increase. We do lay down or exchange justified earthly rights, earthly interests, for heavenly ones,--and in proportion as we have zeal and energy in so doing will be our standing at the inspection when the nobleman returns. He who sacrifices most zealously his justified human nature, not only by consecrating it, but by daily sacrificing it, will be the one who will have the ten pounds at the conclusion of the test, and to such the Lord would say, Have thou dominion over ten cities.

If, then, our reward at our Lord's hands is to be in proportion as we shall be diligent in using this "pound," opportunity received through our justification, let us lay aside every weight and every besetting sin, and strive with patience to do with our might all that our hands find to do. The faithful ones seeking opportunities will find them; the less faithful, the less zealous, will find fewer, while others will pass them by, and ultimately miss the reward, and the opportunities previously theirs through justification will be given to those more zealous.

LOVE THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

Question.--In the Berean Bible Study on Love Question V. is, "What is the difference between duty love (filio) and disinterested or divine love (agapee)? I am somewhat perplexed regarding this difference, and would thank you for a little more light on the subject.

Answer.--Three different words in our Greek New Testament are translated love. The principal word,

which well corresponds to our word love in English, is agapee. This word is used whenever the highest type of love is described; hence we have designated it disinterested or divine love, as representing the highest type of love when used respecting the Lord and his people. Nevertheless, just like our English word love, agapee is also used in an inferior sense, as for instance when describing love for the world in the text, "If any man love [agapee] the world, the love [agapee] of the Father is not in him."--I John 2:15.

The Greek word philadelphia signifies brotherly love, and of course is always used in a good sense, because the brethren of the Lord are all "holy brethren." We are exhorted to develop this love for the brethren (philadelphia), and it is given as a mark or indication that we are New Creatures in Christ. Nevertheless the Apostle exhorts that we go on beyond this degree of love (philadelphia) and attain to the broader or divine love, the disinterested love (agapee). Note an instance of this: "Add to your faith patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness [philadelphia], and to brotherly kindness, charity--Love [agapee]." (2 Pet. 1:7.) The Apostle thus uses the word agapee to indicate the broader and more comprehensive love as the highest attainment of Christian character. Similarly, when describing the greatest thing in the world, in I Corinthians 13:2,3,4,8,13, the Apostle uses the Greek word agapee, love--in our common version translated charity. The culmination of his argument is, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity [love--agapee], and the greatest of these is charity [love--agapee]." Agapee is also used in I John 3:1, where the Apostle says, "Behold what manner of love [agapee]"; and "He that dwelleth in love [agapee] dwelleth in God." In the next verse also we read, "Herein is our love [agapee] made perfect." Again we find agapee used by the Apostle in the statement, "God commendeth his love [agapee] toward us"; and again, "Love [agapee] worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love [agapee] is the fulfilling of the law."--Rom. 5:8,13.

The Greek word filio, rendered love, we have designated "duty love," but we fear that this does not give a sufficiently clear understanding of its meaning. The noun which is the basis for the verb is frequently translated kiss in the New Testament, and by implication the kiss belongs to the family and implies a love that is more or less respect, or we might say exclusive or selfish--not general--not for everybody. It represents more of an individual or family love, and is used either in a good or an evil sense, as, for instance, we read, "The Father loveth the Son" (John 5:20); and again, "The world will love its own."--John 15:19.

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