

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

QUESTION and ANSWER

QUESTION

In Revelation vii., the identity of the great multitude in verse 9 is given in verse 14, but this leaves a difficulty. If the twenty-four elders represent the saints taken to heaven at the Rapture, none are left on earth but Christ rejectors, and these will have no further chance of blessing, according to 2 Thess. ii.11,12. The 144,000 of sealed ones of the twelve tribes of Israel constitute a similar difficulty.

Could these saints be young people, who at the time of the Rapture had not reached years of understanding? Has God providentially reserved a number, like those of Israel, whose eyes are veiled till the time comes?

J. D. HATT

ANSWER

The second chapter of 2 Thessalonians is concerned with the apostasy of Christendom, and though the limits of Christendom are today no longer clearly defined, there may be many besides young people who are ignorant of the truth, rather than rejectors of it, in many parts of the world. For them, it may be, the gospel of the kingdom will provide a further opportunity, and a separate test. The rejectors of what is now preached will be judged according to 2 Thess. i.8-10, and those tested by the gospel of the kingdom according to Matt. xxv.31-46.

As to Israel, there always has been a believing 'remnant', and no doubt there will be such after the Rapture. The worship of 'the man of sin' will perhaps, be a shock to awaken them. Editor.

(Further suggestions on this or other answers to questions will be welcomed).

A DAY OF RETURN

(notes of an address)

It has been well said that the day of Ezra was a day of return — a return to the land, a return to the God of Israel, Jehovah Elohim, and more particularly perhaps a return to the authority of the word of God. Isaiah gives the principle, 'The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God' (chap. x.21). Weak and defenceless in themselves, they had returned in faith to the mighty God. And it is beautiful to see that in their weakness they began with God and not with themselves. The first thing they did was to set the altar upon its bases, and to offer sacrifices to their God (Ezra. iii.). They not only placed themselves under the protecting wing of Jehovah, but they began with gathering round His name.

These Jews could look back to the great days of Solomon's glorious kingdom, when the magnificent temple at Jerusalem was in its early glory. Now what a contrast! The people taken captive to Babylon, the city in ruins and the house of God destroyed! We too can look back — to Pentecost, when the Spirit of God brought multitudes out of the world to the name of the Lord Jesus, and assemblies were formed in the midst of darkness and paganism. Yet what do we find today? We find the corporate testimony characterized by brokenness and division, with modernism undermining the very foundations of the faith. In spite of this outward failure let us remember that the great truth declared so powerfully in Pentecostal days abides for us today. We read that the early believers continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts ii.42). What was the apostles' doctrine? Our Lord Jesus glorified as Man at God's right hand, and the holy Spirit, a divine Person, here on earth, indwelling each believer and uniting him to the risen Head in heaven.

Just as this remnant in the book of Ezra were endeavouring to answer to the mind of God for His people, so in the early part of last century a remnant was gathered out of the dead

formality of Christendom to the name of the Lord Jesus, Himself the all-sufficient and all-attractive Object of their worship.

Alas, the early zeal and first love soon declined. Someone has said, 'There is no community that has ever been able to retain in its original freshness and power any truth beyond that generation to which it was first committed'. Blessing has been given, but it has slipped away from the second generation. And here we are at the close of the church's history: the Lord Jesus is soon to appear. Are we going to say that it is too late to expect blessing, and just be content with things as they are? I am sure of this that if you and I but turn to God as the great and only source of blessing we shall find Him just as ready to bless as ever He was.

With this Jewish remnant the fact that God was acting in blessing drew out the wiles and opposition of the enemy, and the work was stopped because of the lack of faith on the part of the people. In chapter v. it is beautiful to see that the same God Who had stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, now stirred up the people by the voice of the prophets. There is nothing more striking in the word of God than to listen to Haggai and Zechariah prophesying in a day of ruin. Haggai encouraged the broken remnant to care for the house of God, assuring them of Jehovah's presence with them, His Spirit abiding with them, and His word their resource (Haggai ii.4,5). And these three things, dear friends, remain for us today: the Lord's presence with us, His Spirit and His word.

So by the gracious intervention of Jehovah through His servants the prophets the work was restarted, and the house of God was finished (see chap. vi.14,15). What joy must have been theirs when they kept the Passover (v.20), and when they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the Lord had made them joyful (v.22).

EZRA'S RETURN

It was some sixty years after this that Ezra the priest accompanied by Levites, singers, porters and Nethinims left Babylon and came up to Jerusalem. He was well qualified

for the work God had given him to do. Besides being a priest he was a *ready scribe in the law of Moses*, and one who could teach the people 'the old paths, where is the good way' (Jer. vi.16). How important for them to return to what was written! Ezra *had prepared his heart* to seek the law of the Lord, and *to do it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (Ezra vii.10).

Let us now look at the striking scene in chapter viii. On the banks of the River Ahava stood a band of some seventeen hundred men besides women and children. They were unarmed and defenceless as they fasted and prayed. It was a strange spot for a prayer meeting. But Ezra and his companions were about to set out on a four months' journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, and the way was infested with wild beasts and brigands. Moreover they carried with them a great treasure, and their object was to carry it safely and intact to Jerusalem, to the house of God. The treasure consisted of silver weighing 750 talents, gold 100 talents, 20 basins of gold of 1,000 drams and two vessels of copper "precious as gold" (chap. viii.26,27). This was a mighty treasure, its value approximating to a million pounds in our money, and with such a responsibility Ezra and his followers cast themselves entirely upon the mercy of the Lord.

We Christians too have a treasure, even the precious truth God has entrusted to us. Paul wrote to Timothy, 'Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us'. May we be encouraged to cleave to the Lord, to hold fast that which has been given to us, and to maintain the truth in a day when on every hand it is being given up.

It is interesting to notice that the treasure carried by Ezra and his companions was not for the rebuilding of the temple — that was already completed, see chapter vi.15 — but its great purpose was to *beautify* the house of the Lord (vii.27). So we are reminded in 1 Cor. iii.10-15 that it is our responsibility to see that we build with gold, silver and precious stones. These beautify and will abide the test of fire. All that

the Spirit of God has taught us of Christ — His preciousness, the glories of His Person and the perfection of His work is treasure to be valued and held fast.

Ezra committed the treasure to chosen men. The names of the two leaders, Sherebiah (God is the originator) and Hashabiah (God is associated) declare the fact that they were associated with the mighty God, the source of all blessing and power. Does not this remind us of Col. i? The Lord Jesus is the great Originator, the Creator of all things (vv.16,17), but He is also the Head of the body, the church (v.18). Thus we are graciously associated with Him in the new creation.

THE JOURNEY'S END AND THE RECKONING

Ezra and his followers were looking on to the end of the journey when their task would be completed and the treasure safely handed over. May we too, like the apostle Paul, have our eye on the goal. 'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' (Phil. iii. 13,14). This is our present privilege, but let us remember too our responsibility, for at the journey's end we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Such a thought should not fill us with alarm, but urge us to greater zeal and faithfulness. Just as the judges at a flower show assess the true value of every exhibit and often state their reasons for commending or rejecting what has been done, so will our blessed Lord perfectly assess what we have done for Him, and we shall see our life's work as He sees it.

The mention of the two vessels of shining copper (chap. viii.27,JND) is interesting. At first sight these might appear of little value compared with the gold and silver, but notice the words 'precious as gold'. A writer has commented, 'Some may be tempted to belittle the poverty of their understanding of the truth, but nothing rightly learned of Christ is insignificant in God's eyes. Whatever it be, therefore, whether a copper vessel, or a basin of gold, "hold fast *what thou hast*,

that no one take thy crown" (Rev. iii.11).'

We said at the beginning that the day of Ezra was a day of return. Let us ask ourselves, *Have we no return to make?* No return to first principles, to the old paths wherein is the right way? No return to first love? To the days when Christ meant so much to us? No return to the One Who stands rejected outside the camp, and bids us go to Him bearing His reproach?

How frequently God had to appeal to His people to return to Him! It is almost the closing appeal of the Old Testament, for in Mal. iii.7 we read, 'Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts'. Jehovah bids them return to Him with all their hearts that He may return to them with the blessing that He longed to pour out upon them. The sad thing was there was no sense of need or failure. On the contrary they were self-satisfied and complacent, and so long as they attended to outward forms and ceremonies they saw no reason to judge themselves. 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord' (Lam. iii.40) is a most salutary word, as much for us today as for those to whom it was spoken. True devotion of heart is the sure road to blessing, and if we would only render to the Lord all that is due to Him, we should find that He on His part would bestow the richest blessing upon His people. 'Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Mal. iii.10).

Let us follow Ezra's example. Let us prepare our hearts to seek the Lord, and let us value His word and do it. May we be doers of the word, and not hearers only (Jas. ii.22), and may we be faithful stewards of the great treasure that has been committed to our care.

R. A. CREETH

SOME OTHER TITLES OF THE SAVIOUR

THE WORD OF GOD, John i.1

The fulness of meaning of this title cannot be adequately expressed by a single English word, and some translators

have preferred to reproduce the Greek, and read 'In the beginning was the Logos'. This, however, is not very helpful to the ordinary reader, leaving him with the question, 'What does "Logos" mean?'

The underlying thought is undoubtedly that 'the Logos' was, and is, the full expression of the mind of God. When the Logos became incarnate, man could look upon Him and, for the first time, see God. To understand what they saw, of course, needed spiritual capacity that only the Holy Spirit could bestow, but still He was Himself the expression of God's mind. The creation was His work, as John says, 'All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made,' and the creation expresses the wisdom and power of God. But for the full display of God's mind 'the Word was made flesh'.

Before we pass on to consider this, however, we must notice the other statements in those first two verses of John's gospel. The *eternity* of His being is declared in the statement that the Word was there in the beginning — He himself had no beginning, for when everything began, the Word was already there. The distinctness of His personality is shown by 'the Word was *with* God', and yet His essential being is divine as shown in the words 'the Word was God'. This distinction of personality was also eternal and unchanging — 'the same was in the beginning with God.'

'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us.' Let us notice the exact language used here — it is not said, 'the Word tabernacled among us in flesh', but the Word was made, or became, flesh, so that it was a real man that tabernacled among us. No doubt an essential part of His displaying God was in the sacrifice of Calvary, but let us not pass over that marvellous unveiling of the eternal life in the Man Christ Jesus, in His living amongst men.

John describes it thus, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.' It is no visible, halo-type glory, nor is John referring to the Transfiguration or Kingdom glory. No, the radiance which

those privileged men beheld was the fulness of grace, combined with the light of perfect truth, displayed in the words and actions of One Who lived here in unhindered communion with God, and in the conscious enjoyment of the Father's love.

John again, in the first chapter of his first epistle, uses similar language: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it . . . that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us).

For man not merely to see, but to be made partaker of that eternal life, the further manifestation of divine love at the Cross was needed, so that sin might be put away, and men might be brought into that divine fellowship of the Father and the Son.

John brings Him before us again under the title of 'the Word' in Rev. xix., where He is seen under the symbol of a warrior-king, leading the hosts of heaven out to judge and to make righteous war upon the Satanic forces under the Beast and the False Prophet.

Among other things, we may learn from this how utterly false is the idea that God is in no way responsible for evil. When grace could no longer make progress among men, He Who is the Word of God, the expression of all that God is, comes forth to put down by His mighty power those forces so alien to God.

'THE WORD' IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

It is sometimes supposed that John is the only writer to refer to the Lord Jesus under this title. However Luke, not exactly in his gospel but in the preamble to it, also does so, showing that the applicability of the title to Jesus was recognized in the Church before John began to write.

Luke speaks of those who 'from the beginning were eyewitnesses of and attendants on the Word' (JND). There can be little doubt that it is the incarnate Word that Luke means,

for 'eye-witnesses' is an unsuitable term in relation to the *spoken* word. Again, 'attendants on' — the word used is often translated 'officers' — seems to indicate service to a *person*.

THE SON OF MAN

This title is one which the Lord Jesus often uses of Himself, and there are only two occasions when others use it of Him, apart an Old Testament quotation. To understand its meaning we ought first to consider its use in the Old Testament.

Psalm viii.4-6.

'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet.'

These words of course refer in the first place to Adam, or shall we say to man as such; but it is quoted in Heb. ii. in reference to the Lord Jesus, and it is in Him that it finds its complete fulfilment (Adam, it has been said, could hardly be called 'son of man'). The title then applies to Jesus as coming in lowliness to suffer death, then exalted and glorified, and finally to have **universal and supreme dominion**, brought about by divine power subjugating all creation to Him.

Daniel vii.13,14.

'I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

Here again the theme of universal dominion given to the Son of man appears, only now it is not just creation which is put under Him, but the organized world of people, nations and languages. And unlike the earthly empires such as Babylon, His kingdom will never give way to any other.

Finally, His kingdom will be, as this vision shows, *heavenly*

in its origin. It will be inaugurated by the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. Here is the origin of the name 'kingdom of heaven'. With these features in mind, we are in a position to understand the use of the title 'Son of man' by the Lord Jesus.

To begin with, we note that He applied to Himself the prophecy of Daniel. Arraigned before the high priest, and challenged to claim that He is 'the Christ, the Son of the Blessed', He replies, 'I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven' (Mark xiv.62).

Again we hear Him speak of 'the Son of man coming in His kingdom', of 'when the Son of man shall come in His glory', and of the day when, from an opened heaven, the angels will ascend and descend upon the Son of man. In the light of such scriptures, how telling is His reference to the homelessness that accompanied His rejection by Israel! Even the foxes had holes, and the birds their roosts, but He Who is to have dominion over all the works of God's hand had nowhere to lay His head.

The prophet Ezekiel was addressed by God as 'son of man' in keeping with the fact that he prophesied not in Israel but in the land of captivity. Israel — the name of that nation that God had owned as His, was now to be disowned, and its people were to be 'men' rather than 'Israelites'. So their prophet is called 'son of man'. Similarly the Lord Jesus, if rejected by Israel as the Christ, takes up His title 'Son of man'; only for Him it is a title of wider glory, of universal dominion. Compare in Matthew xvi., verses 20 and 27.

THE INNER MEANING OF THE TITLE

Perhaps the most characteristic uses of the title occur in that gospel which dwells so much on His deity, and this perhaps gives us a clue to its inner meaning.

Among the Jews, 'son of' seems to have been used to express a certain *character*, so that we have 'sons of Belial' (i.e. sons of wickedness), 'son of peace', and if we think of 'Son of man' in this light, it conveys the thought that *His*

manhood fulfilled, as the first man's never did, God's ideal for man.

We have noticed before that if John's gospel brings out pre-eminently the Lord's deity, it equally emphasizes the reality and importance of His humanity, beginning with that most emphatic expression, 'the Word was made flesh'.

Then it is through His becoming Man that the problem of man's sin and ruin is solved, and so it is in John's gospel that we read 'the Son of man must be lifted up' (iii.14); 'except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you' (vi.53); and also xii.23, 'the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified', and xiii.31, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him'. The last two quotations refer, of course, to His God-glorifying sacrifice on the cross.

Finally, as God is revealed in Him, the Son of man; and the way of salvation is opened by Him; so also the final judgment of those who refuse to repent is in His hands (v.27), 'because He is **Son of man**'. The rejected Saviour becomes the Judge.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE DIVINE WORKERS XLIII

'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work' (John v.17)

Luke xviii-1. It is a means of blessing and instruction for us to trace the order in which Luke is directed to record events affecting the Lord Jesus and His teaching resulting from them. The sarcastic challenge of the Pharisees as to the coming of the Kingdom had been answered by truth and with solemn warning. There now follows a parable that links the thought of prayer with the real situation of the suppliant. It also carries with it full assurance as to the outcome.

It is of great importance to consider the circumstances in which Jesus acts and the persons to whom His words are addressed. There was never anything superficial in *His* conversation, or motiveless in what He did. The scene presented is exclusively Jewish. He is speaking to Jews. His parable story pictures them as a widow pleading for her rights before an unjust judge. The prayer of the widow is persistent, and it

emphasizes the essential of sincerity. The heartfelt desire in true prayer is not to be compared with the perfunctory petitions of religionism. The principle remains for every approach to God, whether by the Jew, to whom He spoke, or others. (The better translation of the verse is 'He spake also a parable to *them* to the purport that *they* should always pray and not faint' (W.K.)). The link is, assuredly, with those who had the character of the repentant minority — those who saw, in the present position, and would see, in a future day, the outcome of national departure from God.

In the Word of God, the thought of helplessness and of poverty is often associated with widowhood. In His parable the Lord Jesus refers to the penitent minority — the remnant of Israel — in this way. God had, long ago and many times, made clear to Israel that He could not be associated with conduct that was contrary to His own holy character. In the sense that she had forfeited His association (as a nation), she was a widow. As being aware of this condition and its consequences, the cry of the repentant 'remnant' of Israel is heard in continued prayer. Hope and assurance are given. They feel and confess a destitution consequent upon their part in the national forsaking of God. In His parable the Lord Jesus draws a powerful comparison between the judge, 'not fearing God and not respecting man', and God. Who still loved His people, even in their failing condition and without any claim upon Him Whom, as Husband, they had deserted.

The principles of God are constant, indeed, and the forceful illustration Jesus gave to His disciples is one that may impress *all* His own. To continue, in faith, to tell our needs in the hearing of One Who invites our dependence upon His all-sufficiency is commended. 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but in the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry' (Hab. ii.3). Such waiting is to show a strength of faith which glorifies God.

v.6 'And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God at all avenge His elect, who cry to Him

day and night, and He bears long as to them. I say unto you that He will avenge them speedily' (W.K.). The Lord continues in emphasis of the certainty of the answer to the cry of His elect in their widowhood. They are shown as deeply aware of the bereft condition of the nation, lacking in the operative power of God on their behalf, and are humbly repentant of their departure from God. There is consolation and a sure promise. If an unjust judge (the very negation of all a judge should be) will answer the pleadings of a poor widow, how much more will a righteous God respond to the faith of 'His elect who cry to Him day and night'. While the message is primarily Jewish in character and will be seen in accomplishment when the Son of Man comes to earth at the approaching crisis of His earthly people, the word is sure for *all* who reach out in faith. 'Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me' (Psalm L.15). v.8 'Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?'

Again there is this note of sadness so often heard when Jesus speaks of the weak response to the available mercy of God. He has told them of those who pray 'day and night' for divine action in regard to their foes. It is a small number, but it is characterized by *faith*. During the time of waiting, others are brought to repentance and the number of the earthly elect is increased. The Lord refers only to His coming to *earth* again as Son of Man. His church will, at that time, be with Him (Rev. xvii.14:xix.14) and thus faith will be rare on the earth — as in the days of Noah and of Lot — but it will be precious to Him, and *only He* can discern it.

Pharisee and Publican

v.9. 'And He spoke also to some, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and made nothing of all the rest of men, this parable' (JND). Every opportunity, by metaphor, by parable and, indeed, by example, was used by the Divine Worker to show the character suited to those who would be subjects of the Kingdom. The parable before us is most arresting in its delineation of the two persons — as opposite

in character as in their approach to God. No finesse is used in the direct personal analysis. 'He spoke also *to* some, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous', and the portrait of that type of Pharisee is drawn by the divine hand. The inmost thoughts of the man are revealed. His very 'standing' is a posture of self-importance (unlike that of the other man which, in the Greek, indicates only the opposite of 'sitting'). The statement made by the Pharisee contained no thought of prayer or expression of need (as though God were unaware of his sins). Boasting himself superior to the rest of men, he prayed 'to himself' (WK) whilst openly judging the taxgatherer as more evil than 'the rapacious, unjust, adulterers'. So does the Lord Jesus most pointedly expose the representative of the religious world in his reliance upon his own righteousness.

This strength of contrast between the Pharisee and the taxgatherer in the Lord's story emphasizes His setting forth of the characteristics of those who form the Kingdom. REPENTANT, in awareness of *sin*, the taxgatherer humbly stands 'afar off', seeking mercy. The voice is the cry of the despised 'remnant' while the self-righteous religionist predominates.

v.14. 'I say unto you this man went down to his house justified rather than that other'. The Lord Jesus makes it clear that, as compared with the Pharisee, the taxgatherer has justly assessed his position. In so doing he does not arrive at the conclusion that he is, himself, 'justified'. In fact he has humbly declared the contrary to be the truth — 'have mercy upon me — a sinner indeed'. Who shall affirm that such an approach remains unanswered! Conviction of sin, disclaimed by the Pharisee, is the precursor of forgiveness. Justification of the sinner follows upon faith in the One by Whose death, in atonement, justification is made available. The Lord Jesus does not represent that the taxgatherer was aware of justification by faith. In His story He compares the two persons as human symbols of existing classes. These were in evidence in His day — and they remain.

EDWARD T. WOOD

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that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Here is the essential difference from the old dispensation. For the yearly sacrifices of the day of atonement were only an acknowledgement of the need for cleansing, and never actually put sin away; whereas the one sacrifice of Calvary is a complete cleansing for all who believe, and therefore maintains them in that cleansed condition.

HIS FUTURE PRIESTLY ACTION

Those sons of Israel who now become believers in Jesus become "partakers of the heavenly calling", but what of Israel herself, still in unbelief, but one day to be restored? It is the same precious blood that will meet her need then, and it is noteworthy that we find the same expression used regarding it that we have in Heb.ii.17: "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people", and "to make reconciliation for iniquity" in the case of "thy people and the holy city", in Daniel ix.24. Thus will the Lord Jesus cleanse His earthly people then as He does those that come to Him now.

Another future action is probably indicated in the type of Melchisedek, who brought bread and wine to Abraham when he returned from delivering Lot from Chedorlaomer and his associate kings (Gen.xiv), blessing Abraham in the name of "the most high God". "King of righteousness" is what the name "Melchisedek" means, and "King of Peace" because he was king of Salem (i.e. peace). As other scriptures indicate that God will use Israel to subdue some of her national enemies (e.g. Ps.cxliv), so, when peace is restored, He Who as Priest after the order of Melchisedek will be then both Priest and King — King of Righteousness and King of Peace — will refresh His people after all the ordeals they have endured and will establish lasting peace. E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

WHEN WILL CHRIST COME?

“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh” (Matthew xxv.13)

It seems clear from Matthew's record of the closing period of the Lord's work on earth, that those who loved Him sought increasingly any occasion to direct His thought to remaining with them. He alone appreciated to the full the need for His death. In the 24th chapter He had evidently been speaking in the public court of the Gentiles (which was separated by “the middle wall of partition” from the court used for ordinary worship unaccompanied with sacrifice). It was here that the treasury receptacles were fixed to the wall and the tables of the money changers were set up. It was Herod's temple — its white marble grandeur and jewelled adornment was calculated to impress the beholder with his beneficence and his ability. Matthew records that “Jesus went out and departed,” and, on being pressed to be shown the buildings of the temple He tells *them* to look upon them, for not one stone shall be left upon another. They follow Him to the Mount of Olives and ask Him “privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?” But coming events, certain though they be, are not to be considered from the point of view of the *time* of their fulfilment so much as the moral effect that should develop from awareness of their approach. So, with this object, Jesus foretells for them the history of Israel — opening in advance the pages of time until the gathering of His scattered people when, as Son of Man, He comes to earth in power to reign (Matthew xxiv.3-31).

From this point (verse 31) Jesus turns to classes of persons who will be affected by these coming events. They will be tested in view of the position they have taken — the events will reveal their REAL position. Pretence will be useless. Some will be tested in regard to Israel — hence the reference to the fig tree putting forth her leaves (verse 32). The warning reference to the days of Noah is significant, also, of the ultimate reaction in judgment which must be the outcome of advancing lawlessness. Within our own lifetime Israel has occupied part of her ancient land, and her flag flies over her

own fleet. The "fig tree" of Israel puts forth her leaves — but in unbelief — and "summer is nigh." Yet, how few, by comparison, are aware of the significance of these unfolding events! The aged fingers of Time turn the pages of Earth's story slowly, but the record is already written, and that which man does not see was told "privately" to those who asked of Jesus in the olive groves near to Calvary almost two thousand years ago.

But what of ourselves — for we, too, are in His thoughts! From verse 45 to verse 51 of Matthew xxiv. there are those tested DURING HIS ABSENCE — by the knowledge of His coming — for knowledge brings responsibility to us all. These are tested in regard to His household, WHILE HE IS AWAY. They are to give "food" to the assembly — "meat in due season" (verse 45). This office of servitude for Him is one of immense responsibility. The Spirit-led servant alone can give meat "IN DUE SEASON." He discerns the character of the times, and the food must be suited to the Master's "household of faith" in the days of changing pressure before He comes. This is the first Christian parable — solemn and discerning — for some take the name of "servant" who are all too heedless of the consequence of unreality when the Master comes — as come He will.

We have before us the second parable, for it directs our thought to the reality of our present expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus for His church. Whilst the first parable brings the searchlight of reality upon the "servant," and the third parable (chapter xxv.19) shows the event fulfilled — "the Lord of those servants cometh" — the present intervening period is one of testing as to the REALITY of our anticipation: we are to "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew xxv.13). It is the state of soul that is tested — not our spoken word, or outward energy. There is danger of losing that which is most valuable. It is the PRESENT expectation of His coming. This is why Jesus draws attention to it by using a well known event in the life of every village and town around them. His illustration is the MEETING OF THE BRIDEGROOM. There is no reference to the marriage of Christ and the Church—the "Bride" is not mentioned here,

and that glad event takes place **AFTER** His coming, and certainly not on earth. His hearers **knew** well what He meant. In their land, their customs were followed, and Jesus makes use of them. The bridegroom leaves his house, usually, late in the evening — with his companions. (Matthew refers to them as “children of the bridechamber”—Matthew ix.). Singers are with them. They are on their way to conduct the bride to the house of the bridegroom’s father. It was customary for many unmarried young women to join the company on its way with torches lit. These are the virgins who have waited. **IT WAS NOT AN APPOINTED HOUR.** None knew when, precisely, the bridegroom would come. Those who were, in reality his friends—known and loved—would wait in readiness. Had they not been to “those that sold”? Had they not spent for him that they might **GIVE** to him that added light of welcome and joy—their testimony to his bridegroom worth!

It was a factual presentation by the Lord Jesus of an event common in their land. There were those wholly for the bridegroom and his interests—there were those wholly for themselves, and their own pleasure. There were the genuine and there were those who only appeared so. There were those who slept lightly and those who slept the heavy sleep of self-indulgence — those listening subconsciously, though overcome by human weariness, and those who gave themselves to sleep.

The cry at midnight was not unrealistic, and the ceremony and feasting would last more than one day. His solemn, though markedly gracious, intent was to stress the need to allow the great **FACT OF HIS COMING** to influence their souls and ours toward a **LIVING EXPECTANCY** of the event — though the hour be unknown and the night far spent. For **NOW** is the time of proving—the time of the trimming of the lamps. The cry has gone forth, and it is the same cry as at the first. About 52 A.D. Paul referred to it in his earliest letter, written to the Thessalonian church—“Ye turned to God from idols . . . to **WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN.**” It is a personal attitude of waiting—there is expectancy sustained by love for the One Who shall come. To wait thus for Him is to be like Him in waiting—for He, too,

waits. The "wicked servant" says "My Lord delays," but to wait the Father's time is not to "delay," for to delay is to be too late — OUR BELOVED WILL NOT BE LATE.

There is a beautiful type of His waiting in Genesis xxiv.63. Isaac went out to meditate in the field (the open country) at eventide, and he lifted up his eyes and saw, and, "behold, the camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel . . . took a vail, and covered herself." Isaac turns from the sorrow of the death of his mother Sarah (the "princess"). Her tent is nearby — but empty. He looks toward the way that will be taken by those who come from Mesopotamia—his bride is journeying to him! One thinks of Him, of whom Isaac was type, as He wept over Jerusalem — her tent empty, her beauty for God dead — and of the joy that sustained Him as He endured the cross, to wait for His bride, the Church, journeying from a far country — journeying still! But she has upon her the treasured pledges of His love — the jewels of silver, telling of His redeeming—jewels of gold (Genesis xxiv.53), constant reminder of that divine standard of righteousness which, as God, He has *established* — as Man, He has *met*. The bride is journeying, indeed, but to One to whom she is already akin. Raiment from His treasure chest, fragrant with His character, adorns her — setting forth His care and His possession of her. So much of the wilderness is past, and the hour of meeting must be near. Soon she will veil herself — for Him alone for whom she has enquired and waited — soon the history of the past, foretelling the glorious future, shall become the ETERNAL PRESENT.

"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." May it be ours to be a source of comfort in present bridal love to Him whom, not having seen, we love, until "the marriage of the Lamb is come", and ultimately His purpose for Israel also is fulfilled.

EDWARD T. WOOD

(Reprinted from *He That Shalt Come Will Come*)

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The following article is written to attempt to answer a series of penetrating and therefore most helpful questions on the topic of our title, which the ordinary "Question and Answer" page has not enough space for. Such questions are of great value, and it is felt that an orderly exposition of the Scripture teaching on this subject is the best way of answering them.

MEANING OF "JUDGMENT SEAT"

It is a mistaken teaching, though often heard, that the Greek word thus translated has any special reference to the bestowal of rewards. No, it is the normal word for a tribunal, and is used for Pilate's judgment seat where the Lord was condemned to be crucified, and for Caesar's (*i.e.*, the Roman tribunal) judgment seat where Paul was tried (Acts xxv.10,17).

JUDGMENT OR MANIFESTATION?

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v.10).

Everyone knows that there are tribunals of various kinds, but the Lord has made it crystal clear that there is one tribunal where the believer in Him will never be brought, and that is where men will appear to answer for their sins, and to receive God's judgment against them. There the Lord Jesus will be the Judge, so that that tribunal may be described as His judgment seat (John v.27; Acts xvii.31), but He Himself has declared that the believer shall not come into judgment (John v.24).

Now in 2 Cor. v.10 it is quite certain that "we all" applies to all men without exception. Those able to give the force of the Greek assure us that it is so, and the ordinary reader can see that the reference to "persuading men", *i.e.*, to believe the gospel, because of "the terror of the Lord" confirms this.

Yet it is also full of significance that Paul does *not* say "We must all be judged", else it would indeed have contradicted the Lord's own assurance. No, he says "We must all appear", or more exactly, "We must all be manifested". What is the difference between judgment and manifestation? Just this: judgment means that our eternal destiny is to be determined there at the judgment seat — either heaven or hell. Manifestation means that those who even now partake of eternal life because God has justified them on the ground of faith, will there be manifested as righteous men — people of whose ways God approves. *Here* they are often overlooked, despised and misjudged, but *there* they will be displayed as those who stood for Christ in a hostile world. This display has a twofold purpose — it is for the glory of God, and it is for blessing of His redeemed ones. Hence we can understand Paul saying "Wherefore we are diligent that . . . we may be acceptable to Him" (not accepted of Him — that we are already on the sole ground of grace), diligent that all our ways should glorify Him in that day.

But what of the unbeliever? What will be the result of manifestation for those who are displayed there in all their sins, uncleansed, unforgiven? Nothing but condemnation. There is nothing in Paul's words to make us conclude that believer and unbeliever will be manifested at the same time, and the Lord Jesus tells us that the dead will be brought forth in *two* resurrections — "they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John v.29). The latter, of course, is what is referred to in John's vision of the great white throne (Rev. xx.).

We may note that the Lord uses similar terms to those of Paul — He speaks of those who have "done good" and those who have "done evil", using general terms like Paul's "good" and "bad". Apart from isolated acts of goodness, none can be said to do good whose lives are not governed by God's will, so that His words most effectively designate believers and unbelievers respectively. We may compare Romans ii.6-10. "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing

seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, etc." Because Scripture declares, as it surveys men, "There is none righteous, no, not one," we must not overlook that it also speaks of the believer in these terms: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He (the Lord) is righteous." Therefore we may conclude that when Paul writes "according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" he has in mind the same two classes of which the Lord speaks.

CONFIDENCE AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT

It is striking that the whole atmosphere of the early verses of 2 Cor. v. is one of assurance and confidence for the believer: and when Paul writes of "the terror of the Lord" it is evident that he did not think of the judgment seat of Christ in terms of terror for himself or for his fellow believers, but he desires "to persuade men", that is, of course, persuade them to believe the gospel. Then he adds, "but we *are* made manifest unto God".

Here then is the secret. The day that is coming is a day of manifestation, when everything will be brought into the light, and the secrets of men's lives and the secrets of their hearts too will be revealed. But the believer in Jesus has come to this already in spirit. Like the woman of Samaria, he has come to One Who knows all that ever he did, but yet loves him and has died to put away his sin. So when he is manifested before the judgment seat it will be the completion of a process already begun here.

If when we become conscious of having sinned we confess it to the Lord, we have the assurance of His word (1 John i.9) that it is forgiven, and if it is our hope to be like Him when He appears, we shall seek to purify ourselves even as He is pure (1 John iii.3). In this way we shall grow in understanding both of His holiness and of ourselves. Whatever we thus get clear now will mean so much less to be made clear in that day! Yet inevitably much now remains dark, but the day will declare it.

When the flesh is no longer present, the need of self justification, which now so often prevents us dealing rightly with our failures, will also have disappeared, and we shall find it easy to condemn what is unworthy. At this point let us consider Col. iii.23-25: **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth a wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”**

This is addressed to Christian slaves who, if they did their work faithfully, “as unto the Lord”, were serving the Lord Christ, even though the service was actually rendered to a heathen master. What a blessed comfort for those in such a condition, which was often wretched in the extreme! Such service the Lord will reward at the judgment seat. The one-time slaves will *receive* “the reward of the inheritance”, *i.e.*, a place of trust and honour in Christ’s kingdom.

Then Paul adds a warning. “But he that doeth a wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons.” Surely a poor slave might be excused if he, say, stole from his master? But no! not a Christian slave! He was to be governed, not by human considerations of fairness and the like, but by reverence for the Lord. And the same righteous Lord Who will so abundantly reward the faithful service *must* also take note of unworthy conduct, even in a slave. The reward for *faithful* service could not be his, or could not be his in fullest measure. It is important to see, however, that his personal standing, as accepted before God in Christ, would be in no way lowered. *That* is all of grace, and nothing of ourselves.

Neither is there any question (as the inquirer asks) of it being an everlasting memorial to his failure. Rather, *each one of us* will be so overwhelmed by the matchless grace that has rewarded our poor efforts that we shall gladly rejoice in what He bestows. Nor shall we, surely, look round upon one another as we tend to do now. Finally, when the millennial kingdom of our Lord comes to an end, will not the rewards associated with it also come to an end? But there is no end to the joys of His presence. “And His servants shall worship Him: and they shall see His face; and His

name shall be in their foreheads . . . and they shall reign for ever and ever."

JUDGING OURSELVES, NOT ONE ANOTHER

Often we feel that others misjudge us. Paul says,

"With me it is a very small thing that I should be examined of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I examine not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that examines me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. iv.3-5).

Now in this passage it is the believer that is in view. Like Paul, we ought to keep a clear conscience, so as to be able to say "I know nothing against myself", but in the bright light of that day things we have missed will all be cleared up and done with for ever, and likewise the misunderstandings of one another. See also Romans xiv.10-12. All that we have done in faith for the Lord will receive His praise. We may take comfort from such passages as Heb. xi., where the Spirit of God marks out for His approval the acts of faith, and the endurance of faith, where *we* might see little to commend.

CHASTENING

Several scriptures make it clear that if His people go wrong now and fail to judge themselves in regard to it the Lord deals with them now — He does not wait for the judgment seat. In 1 Cor. xi. we read of those who incurred His chastening because of their behaviour at His Supper.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

But His chastening has the purpose of leading us to self judgment, for His desire for us is that we should be partakers of His holiness, so as to draw us nearer to Himself.

See Rev.iii.19. Only in that day shall we fully appreciate the grace that has saved us and led us through this great wilderness, in spite of our frequent waywardness and lack of faith.

THE BELIEVER'S WORK FOR CHRIST

One particular aspect of the day of manifestation concerns, not so much the believer's life in general, but his service for Christ. Paul speaks of this under the figure of building up the temple of God, on that one foundation — Christ Jesus — which has already been laid. He speaks of building with gold, silver or valuable stone on the one hand, and of wood, hay, stubble on the other. The point to be considered is, how will such work stand the test of God's searching gaze, which is here compared to a fire? **"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide . . . he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire"** (1 Cor. iii.13-15).

The distinction between the man himself (supposed a true believer, and hence there in that glorified body which grace has bestowed) and his work, is so plain that little is needed in exposition. It may be pointed out that the last words "yet so as by fire", or "through the fire" suggest a man escaping from a burning building — unharmed, but having to leave everything behind to be consumed.

No doubt this pictures an extreme case, and perhaps no believer will lose *all* that he has built, or thought he was building, for God.

This solemn scripture shows the importance of testing our work, as well as ourselves, by God's word.

How shall we regard, in that day, the loss of what we have wrought? One would suggest that we shall be only too glad to see it go, when we realise that it is unworthy of our blessed Saviour. In that day, not only shall we know as we are known, but we shall see as Christ sees, and think of things as He does.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

THE LORD JESUS AS PRIEST

In only one book of the New Testament, namely the Epistle to the Hebrews, is the Lord Jesus referred to as Priest. A great part of that book is devoted to the exposition of this theme.

What is a priest? Taking not the modern idea of that office, but as it is found in the Bible, we may say that his functions were to represent the people before God in the earthly tabernacle (Ez.xxviii), and to bring to Him their gifts and sacrifices. Especially on the great day of atonement once a year the high priest offered the sacrifice by means of which the tabernacle and all that pertained to it were cleansed from "the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (Lev.xvi.16,19), and the people's sins were put away (xvi.21,22).

It was also the priest's function to carry out the ritual for cleansing the defiled and the leper, and to instruct the people in the law of God (Deut.xvii.11; Mal.ii.6,7). Thus he needed to be, in the words of Heb.v.2, one "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity."

To what extent does the priesthood of the Lord Jesus correspond to this pattern? Though the basic idea is the same, the manner in which He fulfils the priestly function is a complete contrast to all that went before.

Now the Hebrews epistle elaborates in detail these contrasts, because it was evidently written to show the Christian Jews that the Levitical system was passing away, and to show the surpassing excellence of that which had replaced it. Now that the passing away is a matter of history, let us concentrate on what is eternal.

A HEAVENLY PRIEST

From first to last, the Epistle to the Hebrews presents the Lord Jesus to us as enthroned in heavenly glory and power, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. "We see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour" (ii.9). "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens" (iv.14).

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (ix.24). It was as thus risen and glorified that His priesthood began: “Being made perfect (i.e. having completed His course) He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedek” (v. 10). And again, “After the similitude of Melchisedek there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life” (vii.16).

That remarkable 110th Psalm, beginning with Jehovah’s invitation to “David’s lord” to sit at His right hand, goes on to announce His oath: “The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek”. Without pursuing in detail the argument of Hebrews, we may summarise it thus: as Melchisedek comes forward in Genesis xiv. with no mention of parentage or successors, or of birth or death; superior to Abraham, and hence to Levi and Levi’s priesthood; so he is a fitting type of Christ as priest: everliving, unfailing and unchanging.

He ministers in the heavenly sanctuary, but as *seated* there. He is not there to offer sacrifice for sins, for upon the cross He did this once for all: “This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God . . . for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (x.12,14). Thus He represents His believing people there in the presence of God, while the Holy Spirit testifies “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (x.17). Having put away their sins by the sacrifice of Himself, He is there as their forerunner, for as He is a heavenly Priest, so are they a heavenly people (iii.1). Meanwhile we are invited, or even urged, to draw near to the heavenly throne to offer by Him our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.

No longer is the Holy of holies hidden by a veil, as in the earthly sanctuary, for that veil was torn asunder when the Saviour died, and to faith heaven is open. He has made a “new and living way” of approach through His shed blood. And if weakness hinders our worship, our Priest is there in

the Holiest to strengthen us. Nothing have we to offer but the grateful acknowledgement of all that He is and all that He has done for us, what Hebrews calls "the fruit of our lips confessing His name".

If the Lord Jesus is there as His people's representative before God, He is also there as their intercessor, to sustain them in all the trials, difficulties and temptations of the way. In His earthly life as man in this world the Lord Jesus became intimately acquainted with all the weakness and sorrow of human life, as well as with human sin and failure. He endured the fiercest Satanic temptations, not only in the wilderness, but from the failures of His disciples (Matt.xvi.23), from the assaults of His enemies, and above all when He came to die (Luke xxii.53), but always without sin.

Thus His people can be sure of His sympathy in every trouble, and of His succour in their weakness. He is not indeed "compassed with infirmity", but nevertheless knows fully what weakness and suffering mean. And as One in Whom temptation found no response He is able to strengthen us likewise to resist it. For let us be clear that where *our* temptations arise from our own corrupt nature (James i.14) we need not sympathy but self-judgment, while we must look to Him for the spiritual power to stand firm. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.iv.15,16).

SIN IN A BELIEVER

The Hebrews epistle does not deal explicitly with this problem, nevertheless the answer to it is clearly given in such scriptures as x.14, "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." For if the believer, sanctified by faith in the blood of Christ, is "perfected for ever", then his subsequent lapse into sin cannot take from that perfection. The Saviour Who died for him is still there for him in the presence of God, "able to save them to the uttermost

(Continued on inside front cover)

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posed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth; even in Him in whom also we have obtained an inheritance" (Eph. i.9-11).

Thus the heavenly influence will be paramount, and universal; but we ought not to imagine the *permanent* presence of the Lord, or of His heavenly saints, upon earth. According to Psalm lxxii. earthly rulers will still have their place, though always subject to Christ the King. The Bible also teaches that Israel, as God's chosen nation, will have the chief place among the nations, and that Jerusalem will be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Is.lxii.3). The temple in Jerusalem will be a "house of prayer for all nations", and many will say "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Micah iv.2).

This world has waited long for its rightful King. Having chosen Satan as its prince, it has had to prove, through millenniums of suffering, what his dominion entailed. Before his grip is finally loosed, he will bring about still more terrible disasters, but his end is certain. At Calvary his head was bruised; his Conqueror will soon reign in unimaginable glory, and the world will bask in its sunshine, and rejoice to acclaim the King Whom it once rejected and crucified.

The blessings of His reign will demonstrate conclusively how false was Satan's insinuation that God sought to deprive man of anything good. The problems that now seem insoluble will vanish like a vapour, as God's King pours out the riches of divine goodness on the world He created.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

ALONE WITH GOD — I

Has secret communion with God become a thing of the past? Is it the case, as it is sometimes said to be, that only a few who name Jesus Christ as Saviour spend more than five minutes of each day alone with God? If so, the weakness, worldliness and unfruitfulness of the Christian Church are explained at once. Our fathers knew far more than we do of prolonged communion with God in the secret place, and they gained thereby a depth in their Christian experience which is sadly lacking today.

We live in a busy age. Life goes on at high pressure. From early morning till late evening, the whirl of the world's machinery never stops. The necessary business of life seems to claim a larger proportion of time than ever and the passion for amusement, which is so characteristic of our age, comes in to seize whatever time is left from more serious pursuits. This is an atmosphere in which Christian fruitfulness cannot possibly survive.

When Luther was in the heat of his great conflict with Rome, and hour after hour was filled with the laborious work of preaching, writing and disputing for the truth, he said, "I cannot get on without three hours of prayer every day." The same thing was seen in David Livingstone, when pioneering for Christ in Africa. His private journals show how very near to God he lived, and how his strength was gained by dwelling much "in the secret place of the most High" (Ps. xci.1). Even for the rather more secular work which forms the "daily round and common task" for most of us, much prayer is needed if our wisdom and strength are not to fail.

Christian life today is identified with public gatherings, united worship and waiting upon God, and an almost continual round of Christian social activities; and it tends on that very count to be greatly unfamiliar with secret prayer and private fellowship with God. There is a danger in this, for ceaseless activity on behalf of others, however useful and laudable, will weaken our spiritual life and ultimately

force from us the sad confession, I have kept the vineyard of others, "but mine own vineyard have I not kept" (Cant. i.6).

Listening Times

The greatest need in these crowded days is a setting apart of listening times; times of quiet, when we can hear the voice from heaven that calls to us unregarded in the busy day. The hour-bell of the clock in an adjoining church tower is rarely heard during the day because of the roar of the traffic below, but let the traffic be silenced in the evening and it can be heard clearly.

One reason why God so often spoke to His servants in the night was that it was then quiet. This, too, is one reason why many of them were sent away into the solitude of the desert, that they might hear what God had to say to them. It may be one reason why sickness and sorrow are sometimes sent into our careless lives. God has something to say to us which, in the whirl of our earthly ambitions, we cannot hear; He makes the noises of the outer world stop so that He might speak to our souls. Sometimes He gives songs in the night; sometimes He instructs in the night. At other times He gives a vision in the night. But all of these we will certainly miss if there is no quiet time in which He can come near to us and we can come near to Him. There are many ways of preparing to receive blessing from God, but perhaps the most essential is this, "commune with your own heart . . . and be still" (Ps. iv.4).

Seclusion

After the resurrection, we read how the disciples were gathered together in the upper room, and suddenly Jesus stood in the midst. It is in John's Gospel that we discover the doors were shut. "Then the same day at evening . . . when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled . . . came Jesus and stood in the midst . . ." (John xx.19). There is more in the simple phrase the *doors were shut* than is at first apparent.

Surely it is true that all His visits take place when the

doors are shut. We need closed doors for our most intimate communion with Him. The still small voice can be heard distinctly only when the noise of the world's traffic is shut out. Is not this the very reason for our Lord's emphasis on seclusion and privacy? "When thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret" (Matt. vi.6). He says in other words, "Let there be no display in your praying"; but more than that, He means, "let there be no hurry and no distraction." Have a quiet place and a quiet time for prayer; but supremely have a quiet heart.

There are, of course, moments when there is no secret chamber with its door that can be closed, and no outward quiet either. Nehemiah could lift up his heart in prayer, and get the needed answer, while standing before the King as his cupbearer and carrying on a conversation with him. So may we all whether in the midst of our work, or walking the crowded streets, or wherever we may be, practise the art of sending glances and petitions to the Throne of Grace, and know the comfort of receiving answers. How strengthening and uplifting these momentary prayers can be will never be known until they have been practised. They can be a tremendous help and blessing.

Our Lord's command goes even further than this. He says in effect, "Shut the door of your heart"; for the heart-door may be left open to all the distractions and disturbances which our busy lives can bring, even though the door of our room is closed. Is this not a common experience? We are never more plagued with worldly cares and irresponsible thoughts than when bending before the Lord in prayer. Not only the weighty things of life, but also its hundred-and-one trivialities come crowding in when we would seek to be shut in with God. We need to stop worldly things that would gain an entrance to our souls and, as it were, say to them as Abraham did to his servants at the foot of Moriah, "abide ye here while I . . . go yonder to worship."

Shut the door of your heart and keep out unbelief. Do not allow the secret misgiving that your prayers will not be

of any use. Shut the door of your heart and keep out formality. Devotion which is mechanical, following a rigid pattern, does not do any good. The use of a formula simply to satisfy conscience is to practise self-deceit. But open the door of your heart to let the Lord cleanse you of sin, for the heart may really be clinging to the sin which the lips are praying about. The only prayer that will count with God is that which is absolutely sincere. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. lxxvi.18). Shut the door of your heart and keep out self-will. To ask God to ratify our foregone conclusions, or to fall in with our own wishes, is not to pray but to dictate to Him. The undertone of every prayer we breathe must be, "not my will, but Thine, be done" (Luke xxii.42).

There is then to be a great shutting out as well as a shutting in. When the heart's door is closed against all disturbances, then fellowship with the Lord will be one of our greatest joys, and the experience of the resurrection evening will be repeated again and again. **"Then came Jesus, the doors being shut . . . and said, Peace be unto you."** T. SPICER

THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR THE SON

The Father's love toward the Son is set forth most clearly and beautifully in the Gospel of John. The Gospel opens with the unfolding of the Son's eternal glories, and in verse 14 of the first chapter we read that the Word became flesh, and His moral glory was contemplated by men, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father". He had been with the Father in the eternal ages, and now a man upon the earth He was still "the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father" (v.18). We might notice that the expression "only-begotten" indicates the uniqueness of our Lord's sonship, and expresses the intimacy and affection of that relationship.

Seven times in the Gospel of John the love of the Father towards His Son is mentioned, and we propose to look at these occasions in the order of their occurrence.

(i) *"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand"* (chap. iii.35)

The Father's love, which in all eternity had rested upon His Son, expressed itself, now that He had humbled Himself to become man, in making Him the object of all the Father's counsels. Into the hands of the Son of His love the Father has committed all things. Love would lavish all upon its object, and find Him completely worthy to possess all. Abraham's servant could bear witness to the immense wealth of his master, and in speaking of the son could say, "unto him hath he given all that he hath" (Gen. xxiv.36). Our Lord is the true Isaac, the heir and destined possessor of all things.

(ii) *"The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth"* (chap. v.20).

These words are part of our Lord's answer to the Jews who sought to kill Him because He said that God was His Father, "making himself equal with God" (v.18). The Lord meets this rejection of His Person by stating "The Son can do nothing of Himself save whatsoever He sees the Father doing: for whatsoever things He does, these things also the Son does in like manner" (v.19, JND). The Lord is speaking in His perfect dependence as a man, yet was He always the Son, and because His great purpose was to declare the Father He would only do what He saw the Father doing. As the Son He was in perfect communion with the Father, and in full enjoyment of the Father's affection, as He goes on to say, "For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." Such is the depth of this divine affection that all the Father's counsels are spread before the Son. Fully acquainted with all the Father's actings He was to perform works greater than any yet seen, for He would act as the Giver of life and the Executor of judgment (vv.21,22).

(iii) *"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again"* (chap. x.17).

Away back in eternity the Son was daily the delight of the Father, rejoicing always before Him (Prov. viii.30). Now walking among men He was the object of His good pleasure — yet how wonderful to be reminded that in the laying down of His life He was furnishing the Father with a fresh motive to love Him! As the good Shepherd He gave His life for the sheep, but here we see the value that this voluntary laying down of His life had in itself, and how precious it was in the eyes of the Father. The Lord had just spoken of the “other sheep”, Gentile believers outside the Jewish fold, who would hear His voice, and would come to Him, forming one flock, and one Shepherd. The laying down of His life and the taking of it again in resurrection were both necessary for the formation of this one flock, but how pleasing to the Father was the moral glory of His beloved Son in His sacrificial obedience! It was this that drew forth the Father’s love in such a striking way.

- (iv) *“As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you”*
(xv.9).

The Lord’s followers were to be characterized by abiding in His love which could only be measured by the Father’s love to the Son. They were to be marked out as those that possessed the priceless treasure of the love of Christ, just as the Son was ever in the enjoyment of the love of the Father.

- (v) *“That the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and has loved them as Thou hast loved Me”* (xvii.23).

The Lord is looking on to the perfect unity of the saints in glory, when they will be “perfected into one” (JND), and Christ will be perfectly set forth in the saints, even as the Father is perfectly set forth in the Son. In that day the glory of Christ as the sent One of the Father, and the love of the Father for the followers of His Son, will be manifested before the world. It will be known then that believers are loved by the Father according to the measure of His love to the Son.

- (vi) "*Thou hast loved Me before the foundation of the world*" (xvii.24).

The Lord's great yearning desire for His own comes out here, for He says, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." It has been said that this verse embraces two eternities, and shows that the source of all our blessing, and of Christ's joy in the ages to come, is the Father's love to Him in the eternity of the past. Another writer says, "It is a joy for us alone, wholly outside and above the world, and given because the Father loved Him before its foundation. None but the Eternal could be thus glorified, but it is the secret glory which none but His own are permitted to contemplate, 'blest answer to reproach and shame', not the public glory in which every eye shall see Him. Nothing less than this meets His desire for us. How truly even now our hearts can say that He is worthy" (W.K.).

- (vii) The Lord closes this wonderful prayer with the words, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that *the love wherewith Thou has loved Me may be in them, and I in them*" (xvii.26).

The Lord had *manifested* the Father's name to those given Him by the Father out of the world (v.6), and by His teaching He had *declared* it, and would still do so when risen from the dead (see xx.17), His great purpose being that the Father's love, which so perfectly centred in Him, might be "in them" as their portion consciously realised and enjoyed.

How wonderful and blessed it is that we, poor failing creatures as we are, are bound up with the display of divine love — the love of the Father to the Son, and the love of both Father and Son for those who through grace have been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love!

R. A. CREETH

WHERE WILL CHRIST COME?

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians iv.16,17).

There have been, in the past, memorable meetings between those who have exerted their influence in human affairs. Great kings, in war and in peace — statesmen of nations, leaders in learning and in the arts — men dedicated to service of good and those driven by impulses of evil: all are recorded somewhere in the chequered history of the world. There have been meetings full of promise — which have been held at the place appointed — but the purpose has failed of fulfilment. There have been others where intent was in harmony with fulfilment but death intervened. More than nineteen centuries of years have passed since a man was directed to write "Go to, now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go . . . ye know not what shall be on the morrow" (James iv.).

Yet there is, available to man, a meeting such as has never been recorded in the pages of the past. To Him, alone, Who has appointed it, the time is known; but all may know the PLACE of that glad gathering. Though it be future by hours or years, yet it is certain — as no human project can be — it is a TRYST made by the SON OF GOD with those He loves — and for whom He died.

WHERE will He come? Believers in Thessalonica knew in the early days of their turning "to God from idols to serve the living and true God." They were gladly aware that their true citizenship was not earthly, and, like their brethren in Philippi, they "looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," who would meet them in the AIR on their way to the Father's house.

The thoughts of men turn to world betterment, and the outcome of education and research exhibits an outward expression of growth to this end. In earth's earlier days a solitary

preacher of righteousness warned a prosperous world of the outcome of its licentious wrongdoing, and even built a ship, with no slip-way to any water, and, in full view of a world of ridicule and unbelief that perished as "the waters increased, and bare up the Ark, and it was lift up ABOVE THE EARTH" (Genesis vii.17).

The contrast between belief and unbelief in the truth of the warning was the contrast of life with death. To Noah, the tainted earth was the scene of coming calamity. He pleaded through the long years for dissociation from it. He was inviting men to an incomparably better citizenship than that in which they were enmeshed. Day followed day, and the earth-bound were deceived by the sameness of seeming continuity. Longsuffering delay was interpreted as evidence of a false warning, but the Flood came, and in the history of more than one ancient people will be found a record of the overthrow of a world that once was — while a family of faith was safe, "lifted up ABOVE the earth."

So does Paul pass on to the Philippian believers the same harmony of thought: "our conversation (our citizen state) is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil.iii.20). It is not to the earth that He comes, for later, when He comes to the earth, it must be for judgment. His believing people do "not come into judgment" (John v.24); He comes to meet them ABOVE the arena of judgment. They are caught up to be *received* by Him — the energy that brings them is divine in its source as in its operation. Not one remains who has, in simple trust, answered to the divine welcome to safety. History will again produce one of its momentous episodes repeating the unbelief of the past, save that this stupendous event has eternal consequences for those who have no part in the glory and wonder of it.

The Meeting Place is known, indeed, and with astonished relief will the changed bodies receive the great impulse of that Eternal Life which has been secured to them in the risen Son of God. Nahum declares, "the clouds are the dust of His feet" (chapter i.3), and the psalmist saw the gleaming chariots of the heavens as they drove across space and sang

in worship at the thought of His might "Who maketh the clouds His chariot" (Psalm civ.). At Bethany a little company who "have seen and their hands have handled" the risen One Who had died, looked again at the chariots of the heaven till one "received Him out of their sight." To them, as to Elisha beholding, in his day, "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings ii.12), there was an exulting awareness of earth overcome, of limits overwhelmed and restrictions dispersed. "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusa'em with great joy" (Luke xxiv.52).

Where will He come? He will come into the realm of "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians ii.2). It is there He has appointed to meet us. Through this sphere of contra influence He passed as Man risen from the dead -- to this invisible kingdom He will come, and with power beyond human capacity to know. In the long years of the captivity when Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem and prayed, his words were heard from the first day (Daniel x.). The heavenly messenger was delayed, in that area of hindrance, by the unseen spirit of dominance over Persia, but no power-prince of the air shall hinder the coming of the One whom God has "set at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Ephesians i.20,21).

In this kingdom of the air a shout will be heard by those who hear beyond the discords of earth and the many voices of men. It is no ordinary shout, and the word used to describe it is only once employed. It is evident there is no shout to compare with it. In the divine record there is "the shout of a king" — it overawed the enemies of Israel — there is the shout of a whole people "when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again" (I Samuel iv.5). It was the frenzied shout of fanaticism soon to be silenced by mourning. There is only one word used exclusively for this great voice — KELEUSMA! It combines encouragement with power — it comes from the very heart of the One who

delivers it as a WELCOME and an ENABLING. It is the VOICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM HIMSELF.

An earthly portrayal of this coming heavenly event is discerned in the Record of long ago—at least seventeen centuries before the Son of God came among men. There, in the Book of the Beginning, we are shown an ageing father, still sorrowing for his absent son. The fingers of death reach out toward his tents, “for the famine was sore in the land.” The dearth of two years has brought home to him, again, that sense of the failure of earth’s resources, and he waits the return of his other sons from Egypt with food. Their arrival is vividly portrayed in Genesis xlv.26. Their first word to Jacob is, “Joseph—yet alive,” and as they rehearse, “all the words of Joseph,” and tell of the place of meeting—“the good land of Goshen”—the wagons of enabling are already at the tent door. All human effort of travel is redundant

there is food, too, for the way — but the abundant joy of the MEETING is to come. The Spirit of God takes the record, suddenly, to the distant land. In Genesis xlvi.1, Israel takes his journey: at verse 29, “Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented HIMSELF unto him.”

We may be sure, in this our day, that, unseen indeed — as by Jacob long ago — the One of whom Joseph was type, is making ready HIS chariot. He, too, gives us food for the way, the wagons of enabling are of HIS providing. But, far better than the evidences that surround and support us, will be that glorious moment in THE PLACE OF HIS APPOINTING when HE WILL PRESENT HIMSELF to ALL HIS OWN in welcoming love.

(Reprinted from *He That Shall Come Will Come*,
by Edward T. Wood.)

PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

THE LORD JESUS AS KING

As this subject formed part of a fairly recent article entitled “The Day of Power” (August 1972) we will endeavour

now to deal with other aspects than those then discussed, though some repetition is inevitable.

SON OF DAVID: KING OF ISRAEL

The reign of David over Israel as "the man after God's own heart", when he achieved through God's favour dominion over the surrounding nations, is a faint foreshadowing of the kingdom of Christ. For God promised to David a descendant, a "son" to sit on his throne, in whom God would establish his kingdom for ever. In evident reference to this promise the angel Gabriel announced to Mary concerning Jesus "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i.32,33).

Accordingly, Jesus was, in God's providence, born in David's city Bethlehem, where the wise men who came seeking the One born King of the Jews found Him, and bringing gifts as to a king, they worshipped Him. But when in due time He came preaching to Israel, few recognised Him as the Christ (*i.e.*, the Anointed One), the Son of David. There was Nathanael, who exclaimed "Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel"; and this was, of course, the faith of the disciples; but when toward the end of His ministry the blind beggar at Jericho asked who was passing by, the crowd could only answer "Jesus of Nazareth". Yet the beggar believed, *before* he was healed, and hailed Him as "Son of David" as he asked for mercy.

At length Jesus presented Himself to Jerusalem, as Zechariah had prophesied, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and riding upon an ass," but Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation. It remained finally for the crucified thief to acknowledge the truth of what was written above His cross, pleading "Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." But the Jewish leaders, alas, had

disowned Him before Pilate, saying, "We have no king but Caesar".

When after Pentecost the apostles preached to the Jews, they proclaimed Him indeed as the risen Christ; but emphasized that He was now glorified in heaven till Israel should repent (Acts iii.19-21, RSV). Till then His kingship and Israel's time of glory were postponed. This was, of course, in order that God might introduce His heavenly counsels for the glory of Christ in the church.

When He comes to reign over the house of Jacob it is as God's King that He will reign. As Jehovah says in Psalm ii., "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion". In his little measure this was true of David himself, whom God called "the man after My own heart, who shall fulfil all My will". But how much more true of David's Son! God's power, God's glory, will be displayed in Him, and all God's purposes of blessing for the earth will be fulfilled when He reigns.

At this point we may emphasize that the saints of the present and past dispensations will not be subjects of that kingdom. For, as Rev.xx.4,6 declares, these will reign with Christ during the thousand years of His earthly kingdom — He will not reign *over* them. Who then will be His subjects? At the beginning there will be Israel, now ready to welcome Him as "the King that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt.xxiii.39), and those of the nations to whom the King has said "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt.xxv.34). To these will be added the vast numbers born during the thousand years

One feature of His kingdom which is now difficult for us to grasp is the close relation that will then exist between "heaven" and earth — between the invisible, spiritual world and the visible earth so familiar to us men. In both the Lord Jesus will be supreme, and the heavenly saints will share in His glory. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath pur-

(Continued on inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(Continued from Inside Back Cover)

Then let me take every opportunity of confessing Him before men, and this will bring home to me as nothing else can, just how much the Saviour means to me. Does it hurt me to hear others speak slightly of Him? If so, it must be because I love Him.

Supporting evidence is indicated in 1 John iii.14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Do I find my heart warming towards others who love the Lord Jesus? Do I enjoy singing His praises in their company, and helping in His work? See also 1 John iv.13; John xiii.35; Rom.viii.16.

In regard to evidence of new birth in others, only God knows the heart, and the only certain evidence is the continuance in the Christian path. "Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb.x.38). But let us be clear that in saying this, we are *not* returning to the first half of the question: it is not my continuance, but my faith in the Saviour, that saves me. So, remarkably, the writer continues, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition," — not, as we might expect, "but of them who hold on to the end", but, "of them who believe to the saving of the soul."

But if continuance gives the only certain evidence, there are other signs which give us tolerable confidence. As with ourselves, we should look for a desire after the Lord's things and a desire to obey His word, but it is vital to remember, especially with a young person, that growth in grace is a slow process, and we must beware of hastily concluding that a person is not born again, because everything in his life is not as it should be. Such factors as upbringing, the teaching he has received, or not received, must also be taken account of.

EDITOR

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Whereas the distinct revelation of the Father and the Son awaited the Incarnation, the Spirit of God is brought before us in the first book of the Bible, in its second verse. His activity is displayed throughout its pages, in both Old and New Testaments. But it will probably be best to begin our study with the fuller New Testament teaching.

A DIVINE PERSON

The Lord Jesus, promising to send the Spirit when He Himself had departed to the Father, makes plain to us that the Holy Spirit is both personal (using this word as the best which our language affords) and divine.

That He is a person, and not a mere influence or power, is shown by the fact that He replaces the Lord Jesus Himself: He is "another Comforter". He is "sent", He "comes", He "speaks". In the Acts we read of Him commanding (x.19; xiii.2); sending (xiii.3); prophesying (xxi.11) — all personal actions. Even more conclusive is that the Lord Jesus says of Him that "He shall not speak of (lit. from) Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak" (John xvi.13).

The baptismal formula "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. xxviii.19) declares that He is God, equally with the Father and the Son. Moreover, the titles "Spirit of Jehovah" (O.T.) and "Spirit of God" (N.T.) confirm this. The Lord Jesus says of Him "Whom the Father will send in My name", and it is He Who reveals the present and future glories of the Lord Jesus (John xvi.13-15), and the deep things of God (1 Cor. ii.10). In the Acts we read of His sovereign direction of the activities of the servants of God (Acts vii.29; x.19,20; xiii.2,4).

This testimony of Scripture as to the nature of the Holy Spirit is thus distinct and clear. The mystery of His presence in every believer, so incomprehensible to the human mind, is still further proof that He is indeed God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Lord Jesus assured His disciples that if He did not depart from this world, the Holy Spirit would not come, and in John vii.39 we are told that the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Yet the *activity* of the Holy Spirit among men is often asserted in the O.T., so perhaps we might say that then He only visited men in a temporary fashion, for special purposes, whereas now He dwells permanently with and in the people of God (John xiv.17). We do not say "in the world", for 1 John iv.4 distinguishes "He that is in you" from "he that is in the world", i.e., Satan. Also, in this we are referring to His sphere of activity, for a divine Person is not limited in a spatial sense.

First, we read of the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters in the preparation of the earth for man; next of His striving, or rather, ceasing to strive with man (Gen. vi.3). He takes control of Balaam to ensure that he uttered only blessings for Israel. Then He imparts a spirit of wisdom and understanding to Bezaleel and Aholiab for the construction of the Tabernacle. Later He wrought to give the needed power to the judges that delivered Israel, giving muscular strength to Samson, and turning Saul "into another man". But for his disobedience the Spirit departed from Saul, and came upon David (1 Sam. xvi.13,14), "from that day forward".

THE PROPHETS

Peter tells us that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i.21). David is very definite, saying, "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. xxiii.2). This then is the meaning of that frequently uttered statement in the prophets: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying."

We also find the Spirit referred to as "the Spirit of Christ", in reference to those prophetic delineations of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. i.11). So

that when we read, for example, the solemn words of Psalm xxii.1, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" — an experience that David, the writer of the Psalm, never actually endured, it is the Holy Spirit expressing beforehand the experience of Christ's own suffering spirit, through the heart and mind of the prophet.

Again, He who was to come into the world as the Saviour of men, even before His incarnation testified to men through the Spirit. We have an example of this in Noah, in whom the Spirit of Christ preached in the days before the Flood (I Pet. iii.19).

THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

That the Holy Spirit has, in all ages, wrought in believing men to give them a new birth, and divine life, is one of those truths which a study of the whole Bible brings clearly to light. Having been dealt with at length in "All Things New, I" (*Words of Help*, December 1972), it would be superfluous to repeat the study here. We may just refer to the Lord's words to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii.5), and point out that this is not to be confused with that further blessing, the distinctive truth of the present dispensation, of the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell all who are cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Before we consider this, we must think of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Lord Jesus Himself.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

His conception by the Virgin was by the power of the Holy Spirit, as she was told by the angel Gabriel: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God". Thus was He Son in manhood just as truly as in deity.

Next His anointing with the Spirit at His baptism. He comes to John, who protests "I have need to be baptized

of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" In explaining to John "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness", perhaps He meant that He would associate Himself with those whose righteousness had its beginning there in their repentance. But as He came up out of the water the Holy Spirit came down and rested upon Him, in the bodily form of a dove, and the Father testified from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." What is implied by this bodily form?

Firstly, the dove is the well known symbol of purity and peace, for the Holy Spirit of God found in Jesus a holy temple in which He could dwell. Secondly, the bodily form perhaps suggests that it was the *body* of the Saviour in which the Spirit would dwell, emphasizing that it was in manhood that He was to serve and suffer. As Peter later declared, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts x.38). And again, Jesus says, "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" — His own power He had laid aside. But in taking this place of subjection He is marked out both as Son of God, and also as the One Who would baptize others with the Holy Spirit. This the Baptist had been told beforehand (John i.34).

When the great atoning Sacrifice had been completed, and its acceptance had been sealed by the Resurrection; when the Saviour had ascended into glory, then He received the Holy Spirit a second time — that He might bestow Him upon those made clean before God by faith in His blood (Acts ii.32, 33, 38, 39; xv.8, 9).

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

(To be continued, D.V.)

ALONE WITH GOD — II

SELF-ESTIMATION

*Search me O God! My actions try,
And let my life appear
As seen by Thy all-searching eye —
To mine my ways make clear.*

If growth is to be maintained in the spiritual life it is necessary that time must be spent alone in the Presence of God. There is little doubt that the Apostle Paul was a man much used by God, but as we begin to consider his life, we find there was time spent in the desert, far removed from public ministry, when he was shut up with God in quiet seclusion. Before, however, we can have any joy in being alone with God, we must learn not to fear being alone with ourselves. If my heart is not right with God I cannot possibly enjoy fellowship with Him; and I cannot be right with Him unless I am right with myself. The fact that I do not spend time with God in the secret place is most often due to a reluctance to see myself as I appear to Him. I am afraid to give my conscience the opportunity of speaking more loudly in case I should make discoveries that will destroy my self-esteem; I am afraid, that is, to see myself as God sees me and as I really am.

This reluctance for self-scrutiny is by no means uncommon. It goes a long way to explain the restlessness of the world today. It is a noisy world; and noise and commotion keep men away from the quietness of the secret place. Men and women of the world who plunge into a round of pleasure and self-satisfaction are only looking for a way of escape from the accusing voice of conscience which would be unbearable if there were a quiet hour left in which it might be heard. There is something very wrong with any man who is afraid to be alone with himself; and yet every one who comes to God must first, like the prodigal, come to himself; and to do that there is no place like seclusion from the noise of the world.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MEN OF GOD

This is no mere dogma; as an examination of Scripture will show it has been the experience of men of God all down the ages. It was only when all other voices were silenced and God's voice alone was heard that Job saw his own sinfulness. He became so acutely aware of it that he cried out, "Behold, O Lord, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee?" (Job xl.4). This man had led a largely blameless life, so much so that God Himself could say, "there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil"; but he had never discovered the depths of his own sinfulness. The accusations and unwarranted suspicions of his three friends only served to justify and blind him to the real truth. When brought face to face with God all illusion vanished and he said, "I repent in dust and ashes."

There was a day when Isaiah was alone, and he was given a wonderful vision of the majesty and holiness of God; but in that moment there was borne in upon him the thought of the contrast between himself and what he saw, and he could only exclaim, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." As he saw the Seraphim and heard them praise the holiness and glory of God, he realised how unlike them he was and how unworthy he was to be there. There is no doubt that Isaiah was truly a man of God, a sanctified man, perhaps at that moment the holiest man living; yet one glimpse of God gave him such a view of himself that he fell down in shame and confession before a holy God.

It is when the light of heaven shines into the dark corners of the soul that there comes the discovery of hidden sin. There is nothing like quiet contemplation of the majesty and holiness of God for stripping away all the common conventional disguises of sin and showing us the naked truth. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every

one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John iii.19-20). The light of God's Word reveals the presence of sin; but let a man stand in the light of His Presence and unsuspected sin will be revealed — "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalm cxxx.3).

It cannot be safe for us to be blind to sin which God sees clearly enough; and yet how often we ignore that area of sinfulness that lies, as it were, below the surface, out of view. Open sin we easily detect, and surely confess, but sins of thought and imagination — the stirrings of pride and envy, covetousness and impurity, resentment and discontent — we seldom think about. If we do bring them to mind it is only to dismiss them as being part of our own nature, temperament or constitution for which we are not responsible. Self-deceit such as this will die in the Presence of God, and most likely we will make the discovery that our worst sins are not the open ones, but the hidden ones.

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

In the Book of Proverbs we find seven things which Solomon said the Lord hates, and it is a most revealing list of evil. Here are most of the sins that men will condemn, and of which most men will be ashamed. Yet, heading the list is a very significant item — "a proud look" (Prov. vi.17). Now there cannot be a proud look unless there is a proud heart behind it, and here, heading the list, it is the hidden pride of heart which is an abomination to God. Two men went up into the Temple to pray, said Jesus; but it was the sanctimonious pride of the Pharisee which was so scathingly condemned by the Master. The same thing can be a snare even to believers.

Our Lord began His Sermon on the Mount by speaking of the distinguishing marks of those who are the heirs of His Kingdom. As we examine them we also find, significantly, that heading the list is the beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v.3). Another day, when the disciples came and asked

Him, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?", He took a child and said, "Whosoever . . . shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii.1-4). The humbling road of self-discovery is the only road that leads to peace of heart and a cleansed conscience which is free from offence. It is in the quiet place before God that we discover the sin which makes the only barrier between Him and ourselves.

Writing to his fellow believers, the Apostle John admits to the possibility of sin on the part of a child of God, at the same time indicating the remedy. "My little children," he says, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John ii.1-2; i.9). That cleansing of the conscience — as often as it is required and sought — is ours and will prepare us for the Presence of God where we may find grace to help in time of need.

T. SPICER

THE DIVINE WORKERS — XLIV

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v.17)

Luke xviii.15. In his presentation of the Son of Man as directed by the Holy Spirit Luke shows events which do not necessarily follow one another in chronological order. They are, however, so placed that for the spiritual reader a deeper impression is available of the beautiful and holy humanity of the Son of Man. So, in the verses before us, may be seen the coming of the infants in their simplicity in contrast with the conceit of the Pharisee and the acknowledged sin of the tax-gatherer.

"And they brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them: but when His disciples saw it they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, Suffer little children to come to me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God". The mothers of Israel sought His touch for their children. Among the credulous or superstitious

even the shadow of a Rabbi was held to be beneficent. The Lord would have discerned their object in coming, yet, even should it be one that was influenced by superstition or actuated by limited knowledge, He received them, and who knows the extent of *His* beneficent touch or the aftermath of *His* blessing! In weakness and dependence the approach of the child is seen. There is no pretence of knowledge or sense of importance. "For of such is the Kingdom of God".

v.18-20. In verses 9 to 14 Luke had recorded the parable of two men, revealing, as in the presence of God, their opposing characters. We are now shown two powerful forces in one human life.

THE YOUNG RULER

Matthew and Mark also write of this young man. He was a product of that time. A junior magistrate (archon) schooled in the law with its complicated traditions (which "made the commandment of God of none effect" Matt. xv.6), his career and livelihood would depend upon his skill in prosecuting, defending or judging those with whom there was a conflict of interpretation affecting the rules of the synagogue. His rewards had accumulated. He was "very rich", young, and seemingly healthy. Mark tells us he came running to overtake the company in the way and, kneeling in the road, addressed himself to Jesus. The chief rulers, of whom John writes, concealed their belief in Jesus for fear of expulsion from the synagogue (John xii.42). To the young ruler, eternal life was not one of his possessions and the need to "inherit" it was a powerful force overriding any fear of the outcome of publicity. His polite address was in contrast with the critical opposition of many others in important positions and the response to it could well be considered as an invitation to test the truth of the word used. "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, God." If his word were true he was in the presence of God manifest in the flesh! We may be sure there was a purpose of grace in this question. The Lord continues "Thou knowest the commandments". To the statement of these — the six "words" of the second

table — the young ruler replies, with conscience untouched, "All these things have I kept from my youth." Looking upon him in the dust of the road, and knowing the power of the possessions that would take him sorrowfully away, the love of Jesus reached out to him (Mark x.21) and who shall say that the day did not come when the "one thing" that he lacked came into his possession as the "treasure in heaven" compared with which his "great possessions" were but passing shadows?

v.24-30. The secret desires of His hearers were known to Jesus. There was a selfishness unjudged — a desire for place and reward in the Kingdom that they expected to come without delay. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" "And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?" It was a disappointed group that expressed their feelings. How little they understood! How amazing was His patient grace! The young ruler had been a living expression to them of one who had used the means available to him to procure present satisfaction with life as he knew it. He relied upon his earthly possessions and had no thought of being separated from the sense of security they gave him. It was surely the grace of God that made him anxious as to the aftermath of life — the ending of his present means of support in the passage of time. It brought a concern for assurance of eternal life.

The disciples were concerned individually for their place in a restored kingdom for Israel. The Lord Jesus did not fail to show them the moral principle involved. They heard the young man speak of "inheriting" eternal life. It was as though there could be a right to it, as one who had kept the Law. He knew, and had kept, the commandments as far as they affected moral behaviour. What more could be required of him? "One thing is lacking to thee yet" — it was the dis-possession of all that could supplant reliance upon Christ. To "follow" Him would be to depend upon Him alone. There were many who heard, but in this reply to the young ruler, the Lord Jesus revealed the disturbing fact that possessions and position were the real control in his life. He did not

possess *them* — they possessed *him*!

Eternal life was available to him but to receive it would be to have no confidence in self — no reliance upon human achievement in any form, for “the flesh profiteth nothing” (John vi.63). There *is* treasure in heaven — but it is *heavenly* treasure. Eternal Life is not purchased by giving up riches. The cost of Eternal Life is beyond price in the precious blood of Christ. To use possessions for His service is to store the eternal treasure of His appreciation.

LESSONS FOR THE HEARERS

In the manner, and the order, in which these events are presented, there is precious unfolding of the character of Christ. It is shown particularly in His patient teaching of the disciples. The historical facts are clear but there is a significant communication which, though unspoken, conveys a message to the hearers. Without any doubt the Lord Jesus was fully aware of the weaknesses of those who followed Him. There was *human* discernment on their part. They saw miracles in amazement, they heard His word of obvious power and wisdom, but there were *effects* that He sought to produce in themselves. It seems that often He sought to reach their consciences through the behaviour of others who came into His presence. In the chapter before us His patient care in this way may be seen.

It has been said that His parables were from instances in human lives known to Him. The widow's unremitting appeal to the unjust judge is linked with assurance of the answer of God in “avenging His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them”. The question to the individual conscience awaits answer to the appeal to join His “elect” in prevailing prayer. The man who stands afar off in the temple seeking mercy, with downcast eyes, is a tax-gatherer shown in contrast with the self-satisfied Pharisee, but his repentant appeal ought to be echoed by all who heard the story — yea, by the whole nation!

The infants are brought with an appeal for His touch, and His permission is given against those who would forbid

them. His welcome would have gladdened the hearts of those in care of the children, but it was directed to the consciences of His followers. "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein". As the young ruler, very rich, yet very sorrowful, left the scene, the words of Jesus expressed a sorrow also — "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God!" He adds emphasis by using their simile of the eye of a needle for the narrow passenger gate adjoining the roadway entrance to the city. So He invites the question "Who then can be saved?" to which He gives the divine answer for every man — "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God". Entry to the kingdom of God was not possible by human energy or ingenuity. The continued prayer of dependence — the repentant heart — the childish faith, were all presented in contrast with the choice of the young ruler whose departure in sorrow should have carried a warning to Peter and those with him who sought, in competition, for place and authority in the kingdom of God.

v.28. "And Peter said, Behold we have left all things and have followed thee". So does Peter take opportunity to show the twelve favourably by comparison with the departing ruler. There is a certain dignity in the Lord's reply to the inference that recompense was due to them. "He said to them, Verily I say unto you, There is no one who hath left home, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not get manifold more at this time, and in the age that is coming life eternal." The promise overflowed with the munificence of God! It was not restricted to *them* alone. It gave assurance, by grace, to *all* who, in turning from the kingdom of men, relinquished *all* that obstructed entry to the kingdom of God. What was the extent of their giving compared with *all* that He was about to give? "He, taking the twelve to Him, said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things written by the prophets of the Son of Man shall be accomplished; for He shall be delivered up to the nations and shall be mocked, and insulted,

and spit upon; and when they have scourged Him they will kill Him, and the third day He will rise again" (vs.31-33). What a contrast to their ambitious thoughts! Our hearts also are all too inadequate in appreciating the depths of His loneliness and the utter absence of sympathy and understanding that tested His strength of purpose in the work of our redemption.

EDWARD T. WOOD

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

What is the infallible evidence of a new birth? Both in oneself and in another? E.G.J.

ANSWER

Is it possible for a soul to be born again, and not remember the experience? Many who love the Lord must answer yes to this, and this may be because they believed in early childhood, before such questions were raised. We must therefore insist that the ability to remember this vital change is not necessary as evidence of the new birth.

Hence we can change the question to, by what infallible evidence can a man know that he is saved?

Now "evidence" is concerned with what can be seen, or perhaps felt, but this can never be a substitute for faith. We are saved by faith, not by knowledge, or by understanding. The Saviour has given us abundant *evidence* of His love for sinners, and of His power and willingness to save all who believe in Him. Do I accept God's verdict on me as a sinner? Have I then believed in Jesus? If so, my faith in Him must be my confidence. John says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself".

Above all let me guard against the idea that the quality of my faith is what matters. As well pull up a seedling to see if it has any roots! The fact that I want to know Him, and that I desire to please Him, is evidence that my faith is rooted in Him. John says again, "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John ii.3), so if I want more evidence, this is the way He shows me.

(Continued Inside Front Cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

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thing different in Elisha. "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha," they said. So, too, the leaders of Israel marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John, "and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." May it be true of us, as we sometimes sing: "Not we may live while here below, But Christ our life may be." A. RETALICK

QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

In Words of Help, December 1973, in answer to a question about the absence of instructions to cover the laver during its transport, the Editor suggested that the instruction might have been omitted by a copyist during the long process of the transmission of the text. Since then his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Septuagint or ancient Greek version of the Old Testament contains an addition not found in the Hebrew. It adds at the end of Numbers iv. 14 the following words: "And they shall take a cloth of purple, and cover the laver and his foot, and put it into a covering of seals' skins, and shall put them upon a frame." This addition is also found in the Samaritan Pentateuch. There seems no good reason to doubt that this is the correct solution to the problem. Editor.

ALONE WITH GOD

WITH HIS WORD

It is in the secret place where we find our most precious moments of communion with God; but so often at such times we are more concerned to do the talking instead of listening. We need to listen as He speaks to us; and those who have "ears to hear" can discern that small voice in the pages of Scripture. The activity of the "secret place" is incomplete without time spent in this way.

Ignorance

In our daily walk, wherever it may take us, we meet with people who own a Christian name, and yet how ignorant they are of the Scriptures! There are indeed many who never open a Bible, except perhaps once a week in church. It is easy to tell whether a man has any knowledge at all of the Scriptures. Often those who profess to be wise become fools when they endeavour to speak of spiritual things, simply because they have never read and studied the only book that speaks with authority on the subject.

As believers we are sometimes told that we make too much of the Scriptures — we are even said to be bibliolaters. But is this so? Most men make too little of the Bible rather than too much. One would have to go far to discover a real idolater of the Bible. If the accusation has any justification at all it may be because our application of the Scriptures appears to be one-sided. We preach from it, but our lives do not always match the preaching.

Daily Bread

If the Word of God is to be of real use to us, we must take it as God meant it to be used, as bread for our hunger. The patriarch Job, who knew much about time spent in the secret place said, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job xxiii.12). Our spiritual life can grow and be sustained only as we are feeding on that word which ministers to us the Living Bread.

As malnutrition brings weakness and disease in its train, so when we discover an enfeebled Christian we may be sure that he is suffering from a lack of spiritual bread. We all need our daily bread: the old as well as the young, the strong as well as the weak, we find it on every table and at almost every meal. There is no man, however learned or great, who can keep healthy spiritually and yet neglect the bread which came down from heaven (John vi.33).

*Thou art the Bread of Life,
O Lord, to me,
Thy Holy Word the truth
That saveth me:
Give me to eat and live . . .*

We may skim the pages of the daily press to keep abreast of news of events in the world, but no hasty or surface-reading of the Bible will give nourishment to the soul. The Psalmist could say, "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm cxix.97). That is something more than merely listening or reading. We need to spend time thinking over what is read, and only in this way will we discover that there is a personal message from God. But this needs the place of quiet rest which is near to the heart of God. For God, who reveals Himself in the Word, can only be met in the secret place of the Most High.

The result of such meditation can be realised from the following quotations from Psalm cxix. "Thy law do I love" (verse 113); "Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies . . . I have more understanding than all my teachers" (verses 98-99). Words like these will be echoed by all those who have been taught the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit. Love for the written word of God grows with our love for the incarnate Word of God. No one would deny that there is much contained in it that is hard to be understood; certainly there is much which we never see till our own experience of life makes it live for us. Many men have never known what the Bible can do until it is read on

some dark day when the things of this life press heavily on the heart. What a comfort the Word can be then!

Christ and the Scriptures

Here we touch on our own experience, but who ever knew the Scriptures better, or resorted to them more often than our Lord Himself? Most of us have our favourite copy which we mark and keep close by for frequent reference. The Saviour had no such copy in His possession and yet no one knew them as He did. A cursory glance at the Gospel records will show how frequently He quoted all parts of Holy Writ — to the confusion of His foes, to the enlightenment of His disciples, or for His own comfort. If any one could have done without them, He could; but no one ever used them more, and when we learn to use them as He did, they will do for us what they did for Him.

But if “the Word of Christ is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom” (Col. iii.16) we need the quiet of the secret place. The “hidden manna” can only be tasted when we are alone with God. Reading and meditating upon it there we will find that, whether for “instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. iii.16) or comfort in sorrow, it has no equal. Nothing can take its place, and knowing this we may well tighten our grasp upon it by taking it daily with us into His Presence.

*Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Be Thou for ever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
And view my Saviour here.*

T. SPICER

THE HOLY SPIRIT, continued

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE CHRISTIAN

The coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell permanently with and in the disciples of Christ, and all the blessings resulting from His coming, is one of the foundation truths of the New Testament revelation, and the others are closely bound up

with it. The rejection of Christ by His earthly people, leading to His atoning death and triumphant resurrection; His ascension into glory at the right hand of God — receiving back as man the glory which He had relinquished when in the form of God — these truths form the necessary basis for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

He has come to reprove the world for its unbelief, testifying to a rejected Christ and strengthening believers in Him, revealing more of His glories. The Spirit has come to unite believers to Christ and hence to one another, forming one body with Christ as its Head. But these things call for more than a summary.

The Spirit of Revelation and of Understanding

There is much that we do not understand concerning spiritual matters, but by the Spirit the simple Christian has available to him far more than was understood even by the prophets of o'd time. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things," John writes to the little children in Christ (1 John ii.20). "At that day ye shall know," the Lord told His puzzled disciples, "that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (John xiv.20). Through the Spirit the glories of Christ were revealed to the apostles, and were written by them for our instruction: the same Spirit enables us to understand them.

"I am in My Father" — His humbling Himself to take a servant's form does not, to those taught of the Spirit, affect the essential unity between Christ and the Father. And as He is now exalted as man upon the Father's throne, so we are in Him — united as indwelt by the same Spirit — and accepted before God in *His* acceptance. "And I in you". As John eisewhere says, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John v.12).

Of old the prophet had written "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him," but the apostle adds, "but God *hath revealed* them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the

deep things of God." It is the present and the future glories of Christ, which He in His grace will share with His own, which should be both our strength and comfort in our life here.

The Spirit gives the Knowledge of God's Love

What is the essential, underlying source of all this blessing which is our present portion or our certain hope? Of course it is the love of God told out at Calvary, and a vital function of the Spirit is to assure our hearts of this. "And hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. v.5).

The Spirit gives power to please God

The old nature, "the flesh", is by nature incapable of pleasing God. But the new nature, though desirous of pleasing Him, is hamstrung at every turn by the ever active flesh, the tendency of which to sin is called by Paul "the law of sin and death". But the Holy Spirit, when we yield to Him, leads us in the opposite direction, and His leading, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," frees us from that other law (Rom. viii.2).

This apostolic phrase is a striking one. "Life in Christ Jesus" is ours by the new birth which we owe to the Spirit's working, and of that life the Spirit Himself is the power and energy. Led by Him the believer is not under the law (of Moses) — he has no need of it to regulate his conduct — but walking in the Spirit an entirely different mode of action results, which is called "the law of the Spirit". For the Spirit leads us to dwell upon the graces and glories of Christ, and this produces likeness to Him in our lives, His love reproducing itself in us. Thus in us the Spirit becomes "the Spirit of Christ", and this is surely the meaning of that change of phrase in Rom. viii.9: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of His."

The Spirit of Liberty and of Sonship

The law (of Moses) sets a man at a distance from God, in the bondage of fear; but the Spirit gives liberty, and free access to Him as our Father, testifying to us "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x.15-17).

As born of God we are His children, and as indwelt by the same Spirit Who indwells Christ, we are brought into the place of sons: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii.14). For God does not only give us this place of love and honour, but by His Spirit we are led into the consciousness of this. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv.6), "Abba", like our own "Dadda", being the little child's own lisping word. Notice how this is said to be "in your hearts", because it is the *experience of intimacy* that the Spirit gives which is referred to, rather than the Spirit Himself.

Now we have noticed the conjunction of the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus with the Father's testimony of Him as His well beloved Son, but *then* as Son He stood alone. But after His resurrection He gave the message to Mary Magdalene, "Go and tell My *brethren* that I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." Then, having ascended to the Father, He sends down the Spirit of sonship upon His brethren. For the Father is bringing "many sons to glory", and He has made the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. He, the Sanctifier, and they who are sanctified, are all of one (company), and He is not ashamed to call them brethren. But only God could thus unite together the holy, righteous Son of man and the once defiled but now redeemed sinners! And how are they united? Because they not only possess His life, but also the same blessed Holy Spirit indwells both Him and them.

May we know what it is to enter fully into the blessedness of this; let us count on the fact that as the Father loves the Son, so does He love those He has given to Him as His brothers (John xvii.26).

The Spirit of Praise and Worship

True worship flows out of this consciousness of sonship. The Lord Jesus showed to the Samaritan woman that no longer would worship be confined to Jerusalem -- where Israel's national worship was offered, but the true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Both Jew and Gentile now have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. ii.18). The true worshippers have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x.19), so that earthly places of worship are superfluous. And what a theme of worship ours is! Yet the very wonder and glory of the blessings which are ours, and the place of nearness which we have in Christ, if we rightly understand it all, make us the more conscious of our weakness. Thus we are utterly dependent upon the power of the Spirit to present acceptable worship to our God. No formal worship will do, no mere repetition of phrases however scriptural, no recitation of a liturgy, however ancient or splendid its language, or, for that matter, however modern and "with it".

Moreover there must be, in the assembly of God's people, freedom for the Spirit to use whoever He will as the mouth-piece of the assembly, as 1 Cor. xiv. shows clearly. To limit this by human arrangements is to quench the Spirit.

Individual worship is however, of paramount importance if the assembly worship is to be full and free. "Be not drunk with wine," says the apostle, "wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit". That is, we should allow the Holy Spirit to dominate us and lead our hearts into the full enjoyment of, and joyful response to, the wonders of God's grace. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord". Whatever the quality of our voices, let us sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord! Let us learn to give thanks always for all things. It is a good thing to begin our prayers, not with petitions, but with thanksgiving and worship.

The Spirit of Power in Testimony

The Lord's promise to His disciples, as He instructed them to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, was "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Thus were those who had once met together behind shut doors for fear of the Jews enabled to go out boldly in Jerusalem and witness for their Lord. Again after Peter and John had been threatened by the Jewish leaders, they reported it to "their own company", and after prayer "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts iv.31). To Timothy who seems to have been of somewhat timid disposition Paul writes "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee . . . for God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner."

Why is it that we seem to know so little of this power?

The Spirit as Intercessor

Prayer is the expression of weakness and dependence, and frequently, as Paul says, our weakness is such that we do not know what we ought to pray for. Then it is that the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with unutterable groanings. The thought here seems to be that the Spirit unites Himself to our spirit enabling us to feel, even if we cannot express, what is right for us to seek from God. "And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God."

The Seal and the Earnest

"After that ye believed (or rather, having believed) ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. i.13,14).

The seal stamps us as belonging to Christ, the purchase of His blood. Till He comes to take possession of His saints,

i.e., to redeem what He has purchased, He gives us the Spirit as the guarantee that all that He has promised us will be ours in due time.

Elsewhere we are told that God has given us "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts". Here it is not the Spirit Himself that is meant, but that foretaste of all our blessing which the Spirit gives us even now to enjoy.

The Uniting Spirit

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii.13).

We have previously referred to the fact that every believer is united to Christ; here Paul shows that in this way a new body has been formed, a body of which Christ is the Head, and believers are the members. Whatever his condition by nature, every believer in Jesus without exception has received the Spirit and by that Spirit has been baptized into that one body — the Church.

Moreover he shows that this is no nominal unity, but is intended by God to be an active expression of the power of the indwelling Spirit, Who works in each member in such a way that each one makes his contribution to the well being of the whole.

What is meant by the concluding statement that we have all been made to drink of one Spirit? Is it not that all have imbibed one spirit — the spirit of Christ — that spirit which was characteristic of Christ, and which is now being produced in His people by the blessed influence and leading of the Spirit of God?

Here is the basis for that uniting bond which we become conscious of when we meet a stranger and then discover that he or she loves the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet so powerful are the fleshly influences at work in us, that to *maintain* that precious unity in practice among the saints, "all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" must be brought into play continually.

The Indwelling Spirit

The indwelling of the Spirit in each believer, so that His presence pervades the whole Church, is not for the present time only. On the contrary, it cannot be seen in its perfection until the day of glory dawns. But God has revealed that He is even now building the saints together as a holy temple, a living temple, "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii.22). This will not be like an earthly house *inside* which one dwells. No, this is being built of living stones, so that the whole wonderful structure is living, and the whole is permeated by the Spirit of God. Christ is both the foundation and the chief cornerstone, for the Church is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all", that is, He fills it with His own fulness.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

ELIJAH'S ASCENSION

In 2 Kings chapter 2 we read of Elijah's remarkable ascent into heaven. In fact, the chapter is introduced by these words: "And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind . . ." The day of his departure had arrived, and evidently God had revealed this to the prophet. The words remind us of those found in the Gospels: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up . . ." (Luke ix.51). We know that this was before the Lord went to the cross, but it appears from this that the hosts of heaven were already prepared to welcome the victorious Saviour back to the glorious home of light from which He had descended in lowly grace thirty-three years before.

Our story begins at Gilgal — not, evidently, the place to the east of Jericho where the people of Israel, under Joshua's leadership, had pitched at the beginning of their conquest of the land, but a place of the same name to the north of Beth-El. We read in verse 2 that they "went down" to Beth-El. In fact, I believe this to be the key to the whole passage. Elijah here may be regarded as a type of our blessed Lord, "Descending from glory on high, With men Thy delight was to dwell," and in the well-known verses in Philippians 2

and Ephesians 4. 9: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"

Elijah first puts his servant Elisha to the test. "Tarry here," he says, "for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-El." In a similar way the Lord warned His would-be followers of the dangers and difficulties of the pathway of the true disciple. Even Peter, James and John had to be reminded that the way would be perilous, but He assured them of His constant presence with them, even unto the end. Elisha assures his master that he will not by any means leave him. He too will go *down*. We often forget that the moving passage in Philippians 2 is prefaced by: "Let this mind be in you," just as the parable of the Good Samaritan is followed by the Lord's command: "Go and do thou likewise."

They come down to Beth-El — the house of God. Here Jacob had seen the vision of a ladder reaching to heaven, but now Beth-El was the site of an idolatrous shrine set up by Jeroboam soon after the division of the kingdom. Yet God has His witness even here. "The sons of the prophets" are also aware of Elijah's impending departure. "Knowest thou not that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head today?" they ask Elisha. Yes, Elisha knows it. He has learned it from his master, and he desires still to be with him as long as he may. The bride in the Song of Songs says: "I sought Him Whom my soul loveth . . . I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go." Similarly, the two at Emmaus constrained the Lord to come in and tarry with them. Do we so desire His companionship? Where are we most likely to find Him? At Beth-El, the house of God — no longer a geographical centre, but everywhere that believers gather to His name, acknowledging Him in their midst. When He was here on earth, we read that He went, "as His custom was," into the synagogue on the sabbath day. We are bidden not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the Day approaching.

Again Elijah puts his servant to the test. "Tarry here,"

he says again, "for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho." Once more Elisha will not leave his master, even though it means a descent of over 2,000 feet to the city of the curse, recently rebuilt during the reign of the wicked king Ahab, in defiance of Joshua's warning centuries before. Our Lord, too, went to Jericho shortly before His death upon the cross, but for the blind man outside the gate, as for Zacchaeus within the city, Jericho's curse was turned into blessing by the One that had come to seek and to save that which was lost. This whole world, indeed, when He came to it, was suffering as a result of the curse of sin, but He came to destroy the works of Satan, to bind the "strong man," and to set his prisoners free.

In Jericho, too, God has His witnesses, and these sons of the prophets, like those at Beth-El, know that Elisha's master is to be taken from him, but again he replies: "I know it; hold ye your peace." He will not tarry here either, for his master's way leads through the Jordan, and he will follow him even there. The sons of the prophets remained in their own place, but "they two went on." We are not told any details of this journey, but we may well assume that "they two" enjoyed sweet discourse on this long journey down to the river that, centuries before, had parted to let the hosts of Israel pass through it into the promised land. Now it divides to let two men pass over, "so that they two went over on dry ground."

Not until they have passed over Jordan does Elijah give his servant the opportunity to ask a favour: "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." If Elijah's passing over Jordan is here a type of our Lord's tasting death for every man, then we can perhaps see a parallel in our Lord's words to His disciples in resurrection: "Receive ye (the) Holy Ghost," and His promise of power from on high. We read in John vii. concerning the Holy Spirit, that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Elisha's request is for a double portion (the firstborn's portion) of his master's spirit. Elijah's response was: "If thou see me taken from thee, it

shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." It would appear that more was necessary than physical presence at the scene. In a later chapter we find that Elisha was blessed with "opened eyes," able to see the spiritual world that was hidden from others. When his master went up by a whirlwind into heaven, we read: "And Elisha *saw* it." He was an eye-witness of that glorious event, just as the company of disciples at Bethany were eye-witnesses of the ascension of the Lord Jesus. In Acts i. we read: "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Now by faith we too can say: "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour."

Elijah's mantle, we read, fell from him as he went up. Long before, on the occasion of their first meeting, the older prophet had cast his mantle upon Elisha, who immediately left his father's farm to go with the man of God. Just so, centuries later, the apostles were to hear the words from the Lord Jesus Himself: "Follow Me," and leave all to be His disciples. Now Elijah's mantle is eagerly seized by the servant as being the symbol of the authority of the man of God. Today the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has the indwelling Spirit of God to witness to the authority of the living Man in the glory, Who could say, even before His ascension: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

It was a wonder that the Jordan parted to let two men cross over on dry land, but Elisha now demands a still greater favour. Smiting the waters with his master's mantle, he asks: "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" and the waters part to let one man pass over dry shod. We may view the first crossing of the Jordan, in company with Elijah, as the experience of the believer who says: "I have died with Christ." In his return, victorious over the smitten waters, we may, perhaps, see the resurrection power mentioned in Ephesians i.19-23, "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe."

The sons of the prophets, waiting at Jericho, saw some-

(Continued Inside Front Cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(Continued from inside back cover)

eternally safe, he cannot perish. If he is a "weak" brother, that is, one not yet fully instructed in the liberty which we have in Christ, he may even, for all we know, be only feeling his way to faith. We cannot be sure. He may be attracted to the truth but may not have firmly grasped it. For such a one the danger of tempting him to act against his conscience might be enough to set him on a path where the truth no longer attracted him.

The Laver Question

A correspondent (Mr. D. Campion, Birmingham) disputes the correctness of the solution to the laver problem suggested last month. He points out that R.S.V. and N.E.B. do not insert the addition, and he quotes a scholar's opinion that it is a spurious interpolation in the LXX. As *Words of Help* has no claim to be a learned magazine, we must leave this point here.

Mr. Campion's solution is that the laver was not covered because it was to be used for cleansing from defilement on the journey. To this there are two objections:—

1. Scripture gives no hint of any use of the laver other than in connection with the Tabernacle as set up according to instructions.

2. If the LXX. addition be rejected, there are no instructions as to who was responsible to *carry* the laver. It is not mentioned in Numbers at all.

EDITOR

THE CHURCH OF GOD

Christ's Own Assembly and Its Foundation

While the idea of the "Congregation of Jehovah" was a familiar one in Old Testament days, the Church as we know it was first spoken of by Christ Himself, after Peter had confessed Him as "Son of the Living God". Israel, the apostles acknowledged, had failed to recognize Him as the Christ, and this failure was to result eventually in Israel being set aside for the time being. So the Lord Jesus tells Peter how favoured he was in that the Father had revealed to him who Jesus was. Then He adds His own blessing: "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build *My assembly*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi.13-18).

"Peter" means rock, or stone, and in this sentence the Lord Jesus makes this play on his name — He would build His own assembly on the grand truth Peter had given utterance to, the characteristic truth, we may say, of the New Testament. Thus Peter would always be associated with the foundation of the Church, even as to him was given the privilege of admitting the first members — three thousand of them. This was his first use of the "keys".

In Eph. ii. Paul states that the Assembly or Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, that is, of course, on the foundation truths which God used them to teach. In Corinthians he speaks of Christ Himself as the foundation.

We may also notice here that the future tense in "I will build" shows that the building had not then started. It could not start till Jesus was glorified and the Holy Spirit had come. Old Testament saints then, do not form part of the Church, however great their own peculiar blessing is.

Churches and the Church

In the Acts we find much reference to local churches, especially the church in Jerusalem, but few references to "the Church", in which the whole Church is certainly

meant. A striking exception is Acts xx.28, "the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood". The reason no doubt is, that while Israel's rejection of Christ was not yet complete, the full truth of the Church could not be brought out, and the status of Gentile believers was felt to be anomalous. But certainly the unity of all believers was felt to exist, and was acted upon, in those early days, as shown for example in the care taken to unite the churches in Samaria and Antioch with churches in Judaea (Acts viii.14-17; xi.22-30), but the doctrine of the one Church, the body of Christ, is brought out gradually in Paul's epistles, and later in all its beauty and glory in Ephesians and Colossians.

Distinctive Features of the Church

The formation of the Church depends on two great facts: that Christ is risen and glorified, exalted far above all principality and power, in the highest place in heaven, and that the Holy Spirit has been sent by Him from the Father. The first gives the assurance of an accomplished redemption for all who believe, and the second gives the power to bring the hearts of men into subjection to Christ, quickening their dead souls by the gospel. The first tells us of the place in Christ which God has given us — He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." The second enables the youngest believer to know these things and to live in the power of them, for the Spirit of God has come to dwell permanently within every believer, and it is by Him that the saints are united together, and united to their Head in heaven.

Hence, though formed on earth, the Church partakes of the heavenly character of Christ glorified. By His resurrection He became Head of the New Creation, and we also partake in this, for, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away, all things are become new" (2 Cor.v.). In this the Church is in contrast to

Israel, and an interesting illustration of this is provided by the place the Feast of Pentecost has in Lev.xxiii. While Israel's feasts — Passover, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles have a definite place in the calendar, Pentecost has not, it merely had to be seven weeks after the offering of the Firstfruits, and this likewise has no definite place — it was just to be the morrow after the Sabbath. The Firstfruits speaks of Christ risen, and so He and the Church are thus joined together. Both belong to the New Creation, not the o'd. The two wave loaves which represent the Church are also spoken of as the firstfruits. This is why national, established churches, necessarily linked with the world system, are wrong — they are a denial of this heavenly, New Creation character.

Another consequence is that all earthly distinctions disappear. The first distinction, that between Jew and Gentile, could not be abolished in practice until Israel's rejection of Christ was virtually complete, and the apostles had a difficult task to get the Gentile believers accepted on equal terms with the Jewish. The **great circumcision controversy**, which plagued Paul to the end, was a reflection of this. Moreover Paul makes clear in Ephesians iii. that for the Gentiles to be "fellow heirs, and of the same body and fellow partakers in Christ by the gospel" was a secret hidden in God's counsels until revealed through him and others.

Other distinctions are also abolished. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian (i.e., national and racial differences), bond nor free (i.e., social and class differences), but Christ is all, and in all."

The Habitation of God through the Spirit

Every believer is a living stone in the temple that Christ is building, which is destined to be God's eternal habitation through the Spirit. But though in one respect it is now incomplete, yet the body of believers now in the world is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and thus the Church

is now the house of God (1 Tim.iii.15). There is nothing else entitled to be so called.

Paul writes his first letter to Timothy to instruct him how he and others should behave in the "House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." **Whatever the simplicity of the building where the church meets, the presence of God calls for seemly behaviour, and obedience to those scriptures given for our guidance (see 1 Cor.xi.2 and the following chapters). It is evident from 1 Cor.xiv. that God's design is that there should be freedom for the Spirit to use any man to express worship or prayer or the exercise of any spiritual gift he may have.**

If the Church is the "pillar and support of the truth", then how important it is that only God's truth should be ministered there, with God's power and not human wisdom or eloquence. The glory of God is displayed in the very fact that once lost sinners should now be found praising His name, and expressing in their worship the wonders of the love of Christ, and in this the manifold wisdom of God is made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph.iii.10).

The Body of Christ

The unity of all believers in the Lord Jesus is spoken of several times in the Scriptures, as in Rom.xii.5, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ," and in 1 Cor.xii.12,13, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." The thought in each case is the variety of function, while all are bound together in one grand unity. Christ is the Head, we are the members. This, incidentally, is the only "membership" found in Scripture, membership of Christ, and not of any local church. Also this variety of function, ministering to the well being of the whole body,

but all distributed by the one Spirit, is a very different thing from the many denominations into which the Church has become divided.

Christ, exalted in heaven, is "head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph.i.22,23). This surely speaks of the infinite resources which He has for the maintenance and blessing of His Church. In chapter iv. are described the gifts which He bestows upon her, beginning with apostles and prophets, and continuing with evangelists, pastors and teachers, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect (i.e., mature) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." However great the failure of the Church, Christ never fails to supply what she needs.

Christ's affection and care for the Church are expressed in chapter v. where Paul urges husbands to "love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Here is shown us the love of Christ, not only for the individual, but for the Church as a whole, and that before it was formed. Does it not remind us of the parable of the merchant seeking goodly pearls, who gave all he had to acquire the "pearl of great price"? So the Lord pictures for us the value of the Church in His sight.

But Paul goes further in Ephesians v. He applies the words spoken in Genesis of Adam and Eve to Christ and the Church: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." This he calls a great mystery, "But I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Thus the Lord's present care for the Church is likened to a man's care for his own body, but the future presentation of the

Church to Himself has in view what Revelation speaks of as "the Lamb's wife". The combination of the two thoughts in Eph.v. is very striking.

The Rapture of the Church and the Marriage of the Lamb

From the beginning believers were taught to look for the return of their Lord and Saviour, an event which surely cannot now be far off! The well known verses in 1 Thess. iv. describe His coming into the air, the resurrection of those who have died in Christ, and the catching up of all the saints together into the air to meet the Lord. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." For this event no prophecy awaits fulfilment, because the Church's whole life is outside the course of this world, so that the Lord may be expected at any moment.

We may suppose that the manifestation of the saints at the judgment seat of Christ occurs next, though no Scripture tells us this. Then comes what is called in Revelation the "Marriage of the Lamb". This is the consummation of the Church's bliss, and is the occasion of great rejoicing in heaven. Who can imagine what it will mean to the saints? But let us also remember that it will be the consummation of joy for the Bridegroom of the Church — what He died for and has waited for down the centuries. "Then shall He see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

A vision of the glory and beauty of the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife" is described later on in Revelation, where the holy city, New Jerusalem, is seen descending from God out of heaven, clothed with the glory of God. But the details of that vision we must leave.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

ALONE WITH GOD — IV

TAKING OTHERS WITH US

There is another aspect of communion with God in the secret place which is most important. It is the privilege of engaging in prayer on behalf of others. The inner chamber

of communion is to be a place of large intercession and it is only when it is so, that there is complete blessing for us.

It is another of those seeming paradoxes of Christian experience that in the place where we are to "spend much time in secret with Jesus alone" we are to have many others with us. We must take our family there, our friends and acquaintance, our colleagues from the office or work-place, the sorrowful and the sinful, the joyful and the downcast, the assembly, the Lord's servants — indeed the whole world has a place since we are exhorted to pray for all men. All these are to come with us that we might speak to God for them and about them. This can be a neglected duty, chiefly because it is a most underestimated privilege.

It is possible that God might have limited our prayers to ourselves; in the same way as we have to repent personally and, believing, accept Jesus Christ individually as our Saviour to realise the blessings of salvation. But it is not so, He not only permits intercessory prayer, but exhorts us, through the Scriptures, to engage in it. This is the means He has given to us to bring help and blessing to others; without our prayers blessing would either not fall or be delayed. In this way we can reach and influence others who are out of reach of our words or who might reject or resent what we would have to say. The shortest way to one for whom we have a concern is by way of the Throne of Grace, where we ask God to do what we cannot do. There must be hundreds, possibly thousands, whose conversion or restoration to grace has resulted from such prayer made in the secret place.

For Friends

It is an expression of the love of Christ in our hearts for others that impels us to bring them into His presence with us; that we might speak with Him about them — to ask that His hand may guide them, His power enable them and His love cheer them. Here is a loving ministry which is open to every child of God and few things are more re-

refreshing and rewarding than to take our friends into the secret place, and talk of each one by name, making known their particular needs to God. In this way we are not only linked closer together, but also closer to the Lord.

The exercise of this ministry of intercession has moreover a reflex influence upon ourselves. It leads to a deepening of our interest in those for whom we pray, and this in turn further stimulates our prayers. Also, it provokes us to a greater watchfulness over ourselves and our conduct lest there be anything that would hinder the effectiveness of our prayers. Sometimes prayer for ourselves may remain unanswered because we have not sought the Lord on behalf of our brother. God may be saying to us, as Joseph did to his brothers in Egypt, "Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you" (Gen. xliii.3). It is surely not without significance that we read at the end of the story of Job, "the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends" (Job xlii.10).

For all Men

Our prayers of intercession however should not stop at the boundaries of our personal acquaintance. In His pattern prayer our Lord teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. vi.10), and we are to join our prayers with His so that His Name may be hallowed, and His will done, on earth, as it is in heaven. The kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ is not yet won, but we hasten the coming day as we pray for all men, everywhere. We are called to be God's watchmen who "give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah lxii.7).

All this is easy work compared with another responsibility which is laid upon us. To intercede for loved ones, friends, fellow believers, even for the countless numbers who are going about in gross darkness is not so difficult as praying for those who are churlish, antagonistic, and even those who actually wrong us.

For Foes

It might be thought going too far to ask for blessing on those who persecute us, spread evil reports and generally display enmity. Yet this is the actual command of our Lord Jesus Christ. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. v.44). Jesus said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke x.27). Asked by the lawyer, "Who is my neighbour?", He told the story of "The Good Samaritan" showing beyond all doubt that we have a personal responsibility not only to complete strangers, but to those who are reckoned as foes. Much grace is needed to pray for these but it is freely available in the secret place.

There is yet another consideration of which we do well to take account. It is that any sense of anger or resentment against those who treat us badly will often prevent prayer for personal blessing being answered. Our Lord said, "if thou . . . rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar . . . first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. v.23,24). This is a rule that may apply to the offering of prayer at the mercy-seat. If prayer seems to remain unanswered let us apply the test of intercession for those who "despitefully use" us and see whether it is not the key to the situation.

The exercise of prayer in this way induces another reflex action, for the secret place will help us to exercise ourselves to see whether there is any reason on our own part for the ill will of others of which we complain. If we make a practice of this as we draw aside with the Lord, then it will be difficult to harbour a sense of irritation or animosity against an offending brother. Forgiveness of sin is one of the first blessings we receive when we come to God, and without it we cannot stand in His presence. Renewed assurance of this forgiveness is what we seek each time we draw aside, but we cannot have it unless we are forgiving

our brother as God forgives us; "not until seven times; but until seventy times seven" (Matt. xviii.22).

So it is that as we exercise the ministry of intercession for others, so there come correcting influences on our own standards and we become better fitted to serve the Lord and our brethren.

T. D. SPICER

QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

The Editor has received further questions which concern difficulties similar to those dealt with in the article "The Judgment Seat of Christ". "Enquirer" may rest assured that such questions are of the utmost value in a magazine such as this, indicating as they do where "words of help" are needed. And once again an orderly exposition of the verses concerned seems the best way of answering the questions. Further, if any reader feels that the Editor's answers are defective, additional or alternative exposition from him will be welcome, if it seems likely to be of help.



- (1) **"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"** (1 Cor. iii.16,17).

The questioner asks about the meaning of the temple of God in this scripture, and its defilement. He asks whether a believer is referred to, and in this case, what the word "destroy" means.

When at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down to dwell among believers in the Lord Jesus, His presence constituted them the temple (lit. *sanctuary*) of God. And while an assembly of Christians gathered in Christ's name is only a part of the whole Church, yet the presence of the Holy Spirit gives it the character, and the responsibility, of God's temple. Hence this must still be true even when the Spirit is grieved by unworthy behaviour, or when His activity

among the saints in leading to worship, prayer or ministry is "quenched" by human interference.

Now of course any sin is defiling, and but for the gracious action of Christ in sanctifying and cleansing His Church with the washing of water by the word (Eph. v.26) its holy character could not be maintained. But the word "defile" in the scripture we are considering refers to something more serious. It should read "if any man *corrupt* the temple of God," i.e., if any man introduce something which destroys the whole character of the Church as God's dwelling place.

Peter's second epistle deals with this, "There shall come false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." And again Jude writes of "Certain men . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

These two scriptures seem to show what Paul also had in mind. He was not referring to true believers at all, though of course such men make a profession. Notice also that while in an earlier verse Paul speaks of a man's work being burned up, but he himself saved, in this case it is the man himself whom God will destroy. This should help to make the difference clear.

(2) **"Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died"** (Rom. xiv.13-15).

"Enquirer" asks how a believer can destroy his brother, seeing that a believer cannot be eternally destroyed.

A similar situation appears in 1 Cor. viii.10-11: **"For if**

any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"

In Romans it seems to be a question of a convert, probably Jewish, who had not learnt that distinctions between permitted and forbidden foods, as in the Jewish law, were no longer binding on a Christian, but who nevertheless was in danger of violating his conscientious scruples through the example of others. Seeing another Christian freely eating what he himself regarded as unclean, he was tempted to defy what he believed was God's will.

To tempt a fellow believer in such a way for the sake of food, says the apostle, is to be failing in love.

In Corinthians Paul is dealing with the claim that there could be nothing really wrong in eating food which had been offered to idols, seeing that the Christian "knew" that the heathen gods had no real existence. Paul argues that even if it were true that the false gods simply do not exist (and this statement of the case overlooks the demons who are the real objects of idol worship) there are many for whom the idol is a real god, though a false one. For these to eat food which had been offered to the idol was to partake in the idol worship, and such worship was a grave sin. This sin they might be tempted to commit by the example of one to whom the whole idol system was an empty sham.

"Enquirer" asks the meaning of a weak brother perishing, and whether restoration would not be possible. He suggests that "perish" in this scripture might mean bodily death, the soul being saved. Alternatively, could it mean that his conscience has become so ill affected that he is no longer serviceable to Christ.

This last sentence points out what might well be a possible effect on a believer, but it does not seem to be the meaning of perishing. Now the words "destroy" in Romans xiv. and "perish" in Corinthians viii. translate the same

Greek word, which by the way has no connection with the word "destroy" in 1 Cor.iii. There seems no valid reason to diminish the force of the word here, to make it mean less than eternal ruin. We may consider the two scriptures together, as they are so alike in the principle involved. When Paul says "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died", and "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died", he is pointing out the effect of such thoughtless conduct, *considered by itself*. It is dangerous for any man to ignore the promptings of conscience, for communion with God is then at once broken, and at once Satan steps in with further temptation. So in effect we have given the brother a push in the wrong direction, and if he be weak in faith, there is the danger of his being turned aside, or even giving up his faith altogether, so as to perish indeed.

This is one side of the picture. Thank God there is another side, for if the man be a true believer, Christ will assuredly fulfil His promise to keep to the end those whom the Father has given Him (John vi.39; x.28,29).

The fact is, that in dealing with the question of non-essential things such as meats, Paul in showing the danger of thoughtless conduct uses it as a lever to awaken love, contrasting it with the love of Christ. He says, "Christ died for him; surely you would not be willing to destroy him for a bit of food, or (in the case of the idol worship) because you are proud of your superior knowledge? It is thus the *tendency* of such conduct that Paul is making clear. Moreover, while today the actual circumstances are vastly different from those which troubled believers then, the *principle* remains valid, and should be an occasion of soul searching for us if we are in the presence of those weak in faith.

Another point is this. What the Lord Jesus has promised is something for every believer to lay hold of in faith and rest in with complete confidence. But that does not enable us to say, of every *professed* believer, that he is

(continued inside front cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

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(Continued from inside back cover)

seems to use in Matt. xxiii.36; xvii.17, it points to the fact that the unbelieving generation of Israel to which the Lord came would continue until He came again. Certainly there is no indication of it being otherwise.

As to Luke ix.27, it records a statement of the Lord (in all three Synoptic gospels) that some of His disciples would not taste of death, till they saw the Kingdom of God. Now in all three gospels, this statement is immediately followed by the Transfiguration, so that the presumption is that He was referring to this event. Now at the Transfiguration, what did they see?

Peter, James and John saw first, the Lord Himself in glory, His face shining like the sun, His homespun clothing a dazzling white. They saw two of the departed saints returned in glory, conversing with Him. They saw the bright cloud, that token of the divine presence which led Israel through the desert, and they heard the divine voice demanding their attention to the Son. The disciples themselves in their earthly condition, completed the scene of the Kingdom of God come here on earth. The Lord then had spoken truly. In view of Who He is, and also of His added assertion of the trustworthiness of these utterances, it surely becomes His professed followers to search carefully for the meaning instead of proclaiming that He was wrong! Why be so sure they knew what He meant?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

(To be continued, D.V.)

THE BOOK OF JONAH

This book is a record of a number of amazing things, far more than the miracle which is all some people can think about. There is first the amazing presumption and self-centredness of the prophet, then the amazing patience and grace of God in dealing with him, and the divine humility which made God justify His ways to him.

God's Purpose to Save Nineveh

We do not know what special wickedness caused God to depart from His usual way at this time of overlooking the "times of ignorance" of the heathen (Acts xvii.30), but it is plain that His purpose in sending Jonah to them was to save them from judgment. The message "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" is to be understood as a warning of judgment, which the repentance of the city made it unnecessary for God to carry out. Yet the warning stood, though the forty days passed; later on Nineveh was indeed destroyed, when the preaching of Jonah and the city's repentance had passed from memory.

Why did Jonah Rebel against God's Command?

It seems extraordinary that a preacher should be afraid of the success of his preaching, but just this seems to have been Jonah's fear. He foresaw Nineveh's giving heed to his message and repenting, and knowing God to be "a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (iv.2), he likewise foresaw that the threatened overthrow of the city would not occur. This he regarded as a calamity rather than a blessing, because he thought his own reputation as a prophet would suffer! The utter selfishness which could reason thus is remarkable, and remarkable indeed is the patient grace with which God sought to prove this to him.

Possibly Jonah was upset also because he had experienced the obstinacy of his own nation Israel in continuing to ignore his prophetic warnings, and he resented the pos-

sibility of the Ninevites being more responsive to God's word.

Jonah's Strange Behaviour

The method which Jonah chose to carry out his disobedience seems to involve a strange inconsistency. Prophet he certainly was, for the Lord Jesus gave him this title, and we have already seen that he knew well the mercy and grace of God. Moreover, as he confessed to the sailors, he knew God as the God of heaven, maker of the sea and the land. Yet we find him taking ship to Tarshish in the far west, to avoid going east to Nineveh fleeing, as he writes "from the presence of the LORD".

How could he imagine that the Maker of heaven and earth was not present in the west as much as in the east, or as much as in the land of Israel? How could he suppose that the God who had dried up the Red Sea was so limited? We cannot give a positive answer to such questions, but can only point out the folly to which the servant of God is prone when he leaves the path of obedience. It is at least paralleled by the foolish ideas about God which wise men of the world utter even today!

God Brings Jonah Back

God gave Jonah a second chance to obey, and His mercy in so doing speaks to all our hearts; but we should hardly expect this to be without suffering for Jonah. Still, it seems that the remarkable method by which he was brought back had more than one object.

As Jonah sailed away to Tarshish, God sent a great storm, which aroused the crew of the ship to call upon their heathen gods for mercy, while Jonah remained insensitive to all in sleep. However, the upshot of it was that they learnt, first from Jonah's lips and then by God's own demonstration, that Jehovah alone was the true God. Telling them that it was on his account that the storm lay on them, he told them to cast him into the sea. When at last they unwillingly followed his advice, the immediate cessation

of the tempest proved the truth of his words. "The men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows," and who shall say that at least some of them were not truly saved?

Their concern for Jonah, their unwillingness to sacrifice him in order to save themselves, while in the best tradition of sailors at all times, is also a painful contrast to Jonah's indifference to the fate of Nineveh. Let us hope that, as the book was probably written by Jonah, it indicates that he did at last learn the lesson God sought to teach him.

Jonah a Type of Christ

Does not the great storm and the likely death of all on the ship prefigure the storm of judgment which will engulf this world? And for this there was but one remedy — one man who, cast overboard to endure the raging sea in his own person, brought about peace and safety for the ship. Of course, the type fails in one vital particular, for it was a guilty man, and not an innocent one, as Christ was, who brought salvation to the ship. But until the true Saviour came, there was no one holy as He was to provide a truer type.

Then also Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of the fish, a feature which we all know prefigured Christ's burial "in the heart of the earth" for a similar time. After this the fish vomited out Jonah on to the dry land, and Jonah became, in the Lord's words, "a sign to the Ninevites." Thus in this he typifies Christ's resurrection — the only sign He would give in answer to the demand for "a sign from heaven."

Jonah's Prayer

The second chapter gives us Jonah's prayer when he found himself in this terrible plight — though perhaps he did not realize then where he was. In his desperate situation his confidence in God seems to have been increased rather than diminished by his feeling that God was dealing

with him. As one who had sought to hide from God he now says "I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple." And though he felt death near, describing it poetically as "I went down to the bottom of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever," yet he is able to say "Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption." How foolish he had been to seek to flee from God! When we consider how he had behaved, what encouragement there is for us all in the confidence he expresses that God would be favourable to him in his turning again to Him! "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thy holy temple." So the Lord caused the fish to vomit up the prophet, safely upon dry land.

Jonah Goes to Nineveh

The usual economy of words in the Scriptures brings out forcibly the drama of Jehovah's second command to Jonah: "And the word of the Lord came again to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh."

As he preached, and as the people believed his message, and, from the king of Nineveh downwards (not perhaps the King of Assyria) repented in sackcloth, and turned from their evil and violence, so Jonah's rebellious feelings returned. God saw their repentance, and did not carry out His threatened judgment, but Jonah became very angry.

God's Further Dealings with Jonah

We marvel at the temerity with which Jonah reminds the Almighty that it was just because of this situation that he had fled away to Tarshish, but we must surely marvel still more at the Lord's way of answering him. As Jonah, thinking only of himself and his reputation as a prophet, asks the Lord that he might die, the Lord merely answers, "Doest thou well to be angry?" The Lord had shown His love to the repentant city, and now He will deal in love with His servant. His desire for His people is always that

they might come to share His own thoughts, so that they might have communion with Him. Jonah was far from this condition, and in order to bring him to it the Almighty ignores his petulance while He prepares further instruction for him. Oh the wonderful patience of His grace!

Jonah, still hoping perhaps for the ruin of the city, sets out to watch from a distance, preparing himself some sort of shade from the boughs of trees. This was evidently not very effective, as any leaves would soon wither, and when God caused a "gourd" — thought to be a "Bottle Gourd" (*Cucurbita pepo*, according to Canon Tristram) — to grow up rapidly over his shelter, he was exceedingly glad of it. Its large leaves provided perfect shade, and kept off the sun's intense heat.

Then "God prepared a worm" to attack the gourd, and as the sun rose it rapidly withered. Then followed a hot, vehement east wind, which completed Jonah's discomfiture. With no effective shade, the sun was too much for him. Angrily he wishes that he might die, and expresses his wish to God. Now had come the moment for God to show Jonah how selfish and unreasonable was his attitude. God asks, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" and Jonah, having lost his self control completely, replies to his God, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."

Will the Almighty then, to a mere man who speaks in such a fashion, stoop to explain His ways to him, and justify His longsuffering to him? Yes, He will, for as He says, "My ways are not your ways, neither are your thoughts My thoughts." So God sets in contrast Jonah's concern for what affected his own comfort and welfare, though it was but a fading plant, with Jehovah's care for the great city of Nineveh. Let us hear God's own words through the prophet, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE DIVINE WORKERS XLV

Luke xviii.31. "He taking the twelve to Him said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things written by the prophets of the Son of Man shall be accomplished". The order, as well as the manner, in which these events are presented shows the divine desire to unfold the character of Christ and the purpose of God. Peter has announced the extent of the sacrifice that he, with the other disciples had made in following Jesus and we may hear the reply in its overflow of recompense both here and hereafter. But the words that follow depict a scene in which the sacrifices of men pale into insignificance by comparison. "Taking the twelve to Him" Jesus speaks as with an intimacy that seeks sympathy and understanding. The perfection with which He does His part — the love that ever emanated from *Him* — would take them into that close "fellowship of His sufferings" which brings response to His sacrifice — the impulse to worship. He speaks of "all the things written by the prophets of the Son of Man" and tells them they "shall be accomplished". It was their firm expectation that He would use His undoubted power to overthrow the Roman control and establish the kingdom for Israel. Their personal ambitions in this connection were known to Jesus. How patiently He prepares them for the shock of events to come! It is a sevenfold exposition. Arrested, mocked, insulted, spit upon, scourged, killed, "and on the third day He will rise again". To hear His measured pronouncement and to be unaware of its meaning is a revelation of the mind of man obscured with his own objectives and wholly unaware of the beneficent purpose of God in salvation for sinful man. "They understood none of these things".

THE BLIND BEGGAR

The approach to Jerusalem would bring them first to the environs of Jericho — the city of the curse. Amid the sorrows of His rejection, and the lack of understanding of those who followed Him and heard His word, there were, at unexpected times, cries of real faith and of understanding. It is here

that, in its association with Jericho and the road to Jerusalem, Luke records one of these. It was a voice raised against the dominant unbelief of the Jewish people. It would not be stilled! One thinks of Jesus hearing it despite the discord of voices of self-interest which were now mingled with animosity. Was it not a cry that brought some comfort to Him? It was a solitary witness, refused by those who would have silenced it — but it was the voice of truth — and it reached Him. It was the first outside the band of His followers — “Son of David, pity me”.

It needed courage to announce Him thus. They had told him that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by. He was rebuked but cried much more “Son of David pity me”. The blindness of those who saw only their own self-interest is in sharp contrast. His cry of distress is heard — for his sightless condition is known to Jesus. “What wilt thou that I should do for thee?” It was surely the wonderful moment for which the poor dependent beggar had waited in patient faith! Here was his time of testimony — “Lord that I should receive my sight”. To him, Jesus was Lord indeed! The One of whom Isaiah had recorded “In that day . . . the eyes of the blind shall see . . . and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah xxix.18-19). “And Jesus said, Receive sight, thy faith hath healed thee. And immediately he received sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people saw, and gave praise to God”.

The cry of faith — the appeal of the distressed — never fails to reach Him. The man sitting by the wayside, begging, becomes rich in his awareness of the power of faith in Christ. This event of history carries a note of future joy even in the “city of the curse” for a day comes — a day of power — when the Son of David shall hear the cry of Israel, made willing as a repentant remnant, seeking an end to their blindness and finding, for the glory of God, salvation in a fulness exceeding all their endeavours and hopes.

Luke xix. The events as recorded by Luke occurred in a disordered world. It is still disordered. Luke does not show them as mere historical sequences. They are a moral picture

of the time and, most important, of the reactions of the Divine Worker to it. It is not material as to whether Bartimaeus was given sight at the entrance, or in the neighbourhood, of Jericho. Shall we not approach the fellowship of His sufferings, Who heard but *one* voice proclaiming Him "Son of David" amid the discords of unbelief!

ZACCHAEUS

In pursuance of the purpose of the Spirit of God Luke turns to the account of Zacchaeus. The crowds have seen evidence of the power and presence of the "Son of David". They are now examined as to their reaction to that pure and abundant *grace* of which, as Messiah, Jesus was the divine exponent. Luke alone records this further exposition of divine grace. An Hebrew is the subject as his name indicates (see the same name in Nehemiah vii.14. "pure"). It will be found also in the Rabbinic writings — a man well known on his own account and especially as the father of the celebrated Rabbi Jochanan ben Zachai. He lived in the district and was well known to all as being under authority from his Roman principal to collect imposts and tributes levied on the Jews. He had subalterns accountable to him, as he was accountable to his superiors. It was an important office, well rewarded, and it seems clear he accepted it in submission to the state of subjection in which the nation was placed owing to departure from the principles of God. To the Jews he was a constant reminder of their servitude to Rome — of their failure and its consequences. They detested him in that capacity and called him a sinner — yet none could disprove his statements. He was evidently a man in a sorrowful occupation yet with "a delicate if not scrupulous conscience" (W.K.). To obtain the services of such men the Roman authority paid them well — they were scarce.

Zacchaeus was not just a little man filled with crowd curiosity. He had a purpose and he sacrificed dignity and expended effort to attain it. "To see Jesus who he was". Jesus knew him, his purpose, and his efforts to achieve it.

As the Good Shepherd calling His sheep by name, He called Zacchaeus. There was no cry of need. We are to see the Divine Worker presenting to the conscience of the crowd an act of perfect GRACE. It bore no relation to the declaration of integrity, nor was it influenced by the undertaking to give the half of his goods to the poor. "Jesus said to him, Today *salvation* is come to this house inasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham: for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost". The Lord Jesus was presenting *Himself* to His people as their Messiah for the last time on earth. In grace and humiliation He was on His way to death by crucifixion for they had *closed their house* to Him. He shows, with this far reaching publicity, and in the brief period that remained to Him, the grace of divine salvation to "that which is lost".

The joy of Zacchaeus as he received Him as Lord to abide in his house is surely a foreshadowing of that coming day when Israel, in repentant submission, will be glad to welcome their Messiah at His second coming to earth.

EDWARD T. WOOD

CHRISTIANS, AWAKE!

*Christians, awake, salute the happy morn,
Whereon the Saviour of the world was born!*

These well known lines remind us of the fact that, in spite of the commercialisation with which it is accompanied, the celebration of Christ's first coming never fails to awaken joy in the Christian heart. Why is it then, that in many parts of Christendom, His second coming in power and glory is so little thought of? If His coming in humility, a coming with which suffering and shame were associated, causes us to rejoice, why is there not far greater joy at the contemplation of the event which will display His true glory before the eyes of men?

Now we cannot altogether avoid the thought that pure human selfishness is part of the reason — for His first coming assured the believer of salvation. But is that all we are interested in? Is our own blessing the most important con-

sideration? However, there are two other causes which account for this strange lack of interest. First, some Christians have been **BRAIN WASHED** by some modern critics of the Bible into accepting the idea that the whole thing is a delusion.

These critics say that the first-century Christians looked for His coming in their lifetime, and as they were disappointed, it is proved that they were wrong in expecting it. They even say that the Lord Himself was mistaken on the point! This should be enough to warn us of the ground where this battle is being fought! We will return to these points presently.

What then do they wish us to understand about the meaning of those many scriptures which warn us of the Lord's unexpected return? In general these are disposed of by another mistaken notion that the second coming means the end of the world. Thus by assuming in turn that this is too far distant to concern us, the Lord's warnings are effectually nullified.

The second cause is bound up with another form of modern unbelief — that the physical re-appearance of Christ at all would be somehow improper — crude and unspiritual, unworthy of a "developed" Christianity.

IS IT FITTING THAT CHRIST SHOULD RE-APPEAR PHYSICALLY?

The writer almost feels like apologising for such a question, but unfortunately we cannot dismiss these notions so easily. The question is bound up with another notion, namely, that His bodily resurrection is a misunderstanding. Now it is plain that if He did not rise bodily, we cannot expect to see Him bodily. But if He did rise bodily, could it be that it was in order that He should be seen by those few disciples only? Is He to be unseen for ever by all the rest of those who love Him?

Now in all four gospels the emphasis is on the disappearance of His **BODY** from the tomb. Also, when He appeared to the disciples, He took pains to impress on them the

IDENTITY of His risen body with His crucified body. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself", He said. Thomas, we remember, refused to believe unless he was satisfied on the point; and how startled was he, a week later, to see the Lord and hear Him echo his words, saying, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." Beware of the MODERN UNBELIEF which masquerades as something more spiritual than simple faith in His word.

It is said that His was a "spiritual resurrection". But this is largely meaningless seeing that death is death of the body, and so separation of spirit from body. It is never the spirit that dies. So in what sense can the spirit be resurrected? Of course, we know His body had undergone a change, and that risen from the dead He can never die again, having now what Paul calls a spiritual body (1 Cor. xv.44). But definitely a body. We do not understand this perhaps; we do not know how He could appear and disappear as He did, but this is no reason for disbelief. Hence also the clear testimony of Scripture that He rose bodily is evidence that He is going to be seen again. As Scripture says, "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him."

He said He would rise again — no one believed Him.

He has said He will come again — do you believe Him?

DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM?

At His first coming many among His people did not want Him. When the Magi enquired where He was to be born, all Jerusalem was troubled. Caiaphas complained that if Jesus were received, the Romans would come and take away "our place and nation" (John xi.48). Do Church leaders of today want Him to return, or would they feel superfluous if He did?

The idea that christianity is concerned with the progress of this world must of course take away from our desire for the Lord to return, but the truth is that only His presence here can put the world to rights. Thus, He must come,

1. To fulfil His promise.
2. Because if not, the Satan-led world is left a victor, for its last view of Him was as a crucified felon.
3. Because the world needs His presence and power — power to heal and control and give peace.

FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS WERE NOT MISTAKEN

They were not mistaken, though they were certainly disappointed. They were not mistaken, because they believed the Lord's promise that He would come again and receive them to Himself (John xiv.2,3). But there was no promise that this would be before death came in. Some other scriptures which promised His coming are:

1 Cor. xv.51,52. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed".

Phil. iii.20. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thess. iv.15-17. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

We see then, that there were definite indications that some believers would be alive when He came, but not necessarily those of the first century. Moreover, in a number of scriptures there are clear warnings of delay.

Luke xix.12. "A certain nobleman went into a *far* country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return."

Matt. xxv.5. "While the bridegroom *tarried*, they all slumbered and slept."

Luke xii.45. "If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming."

Matt. xxiv.6. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

2 Peter iii.8,9. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise . . . but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Finally, consider Luke xxi.23-33. Too long to quote in full, it begins "There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." The indefinite delay here is unmistakable.

THE LORD WAS NOT MISTAKEN

The claim of some modernist writers that the Lord was mistaken is chiefly based on His statement "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled" (Luke xxi.32). This they sometimes link with Luke ix.27.

Now the full passage (the first) prophesies first the destruction of Jerusalem; then its treading down by the Gentiles for an indefinite period; then in verse 25 the beginning of a series of signs in the sun, moon and stars, accompanied by distress upon earth among the nations. This is when the last days are actually at hand — *then* there is distress everywhere, and not only for the scattered Jews. Once the last days begin, there will be no delay, and it is obviously of this period that the Lord says, that the generation which sees the signs will see the end. His prophetic eye sees the future as already present, just as the prophets do, so that the phrase "this generation" rightly describes the men of that day.

Another interpretation of the phrase understands it in a moral sense, as in Deuteronomy xxxii.5, "a perverse and crooked generation". So again in Psalm xii.7, and other scriptures. Taken in this sense, which the Lord Himself

(continued inside front cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

YET A VERY LITTLE WHILE

(Hebrews x.37)

Yet a very little while He that comes will come, and will not delay. "He that comes"! precious thought for us. Does it not seem that He is already on the way, as when He said of old, in speaking of Lazarus, His friend, "I go to awake him"? These words are in the present tense to make us understand that the moment is quite near. Every day down here brings us nearer. When will it be, this evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crow-ing, or in the morning? It matters little. When we shall see Him, Who has loved us, it will be the "morning without cloud", the dawn of the eternal day. His heart will be satisfied, and ours will overflow with praise and joy.

But these five words "yet a very little while" speak to our consciences also. "Yet a very little while" to serve our Lord, "a very little while" to render witness to Him, "a very little while" to speak of Him to those who do not yet know Him. When we rest in His presence, the time of service will be past, the time of witness also.

"Yet a very little while He that comes will come". May this word be our safeguard against temptation from without and from within; may it be a stimulant in our service, however small that may be; may it strengthen our hands when we are weary and help us to run the race with patience.

(A fragment from "Messenger Evangelique", June 1971, translated by D. B. E. Atkins)

THE NAME "JESUS" IN HEBREWS

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a magnificent treatise setting forth the glories and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in view of this it is remarkable that several times throughout the epistle the Lord is spoken of by His personal and lowly name of Jesus. This may be to emphasize, especially to Jewish believers to whom the epistle was primarily written, that the One Who walked here as the humble, despised Jesus of Nazareth is God's own Son, now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Let us consider some of these references to the name Jesus. The first is in chapter ii.9. "*We see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.*" The context of the passage looks on to the time when everything will be subjected to the Lord Jesus as Son of man in the day of millennial glory, but while as yet we do not see all things put under Him, we do now by faith see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour. We see Jesus, once the lowly and rejected man on earth, now the risen and exalted man in heaven. How beautiful it is to notice that it was "*by the grace of God He tasted death for every man*"! It was not because of anything in Himself that He went into death, for He was absolutely without sin in every way, but it was in pure grace, for others.

The second reference is in chapter iii.1. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus.*" As the Apostle He is God's representative, the Sent One, Who came from God into this world to make God known and to undertake God's work. As the High Priest He has gone back to God that He might carry on His people's cause in the presence of God, where He ever lives to make intercession for them. We are thus encouraged to consider this man in relation to His twofold office, faithful as He is to Him that appointed Him — faithful as Apostle here on earth and as High Priest now in heaven. As pilgrims passing through this world with its trials from day to day, travelling on to the Rest of God, let us diligently consider Him, that is, fix our eyes and hearts upon Him

and be fully occupied with Him in the beauties of His person and the perfection of His work.

At the end of chapter iv. we have the third occurrence of the personal name. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (iv. 14). Notice that the closing verses of the chapter bring before us the three-fold provision for the wilderness journey: the word of God, the priesthood of Christ, and the throne of grace.

First, the word of God detects what would hinder us in running the race set before us, penetrating beneath the outward acts and laying bare the very inmost thoughts and hidden springs of the heart. Secondly, lest we should be cast down or discouraged we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens into the very presence of God, One Who was tried in all points as we are, sin apart, and is therefore able to sympathize with our infirmities. The title given to our Lord in this connection, "*Jesus the Son of God,*" is very precious. Being truly man He can enter into our trials and difficulties as One Who has a truly human heart, and being God He has all resources at His disposal to meet our need. Then thirdly, having such a High Priest we are encouraged to come boldly to God, to His throne of grace, where our High Priest is sitting, to obtain the mercy and grace we so much need in our wilderness journey.

This epistle is full of encouragement for us. At the end of chapter vi. the writer shows that the basis of the believer's hope is absolutely unchanging, for it is the counsel and oath of God Himself. This hope, as the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, has laid hold upon that which is within the veil, in the very presence of God. Our hearts are thus directed to heaven, where our Forerunner, even Jesus, has entered, the pledge that we too shall enter in God's good time. He ran the race before us, and has entered heaven to make the way for us. Jesus has entered there as High Priest: and His priesthood is not of the passing character of Aaron's, but after a new and eternal order, that of Melchisedec.

There is another reference to the personal name of Jesus in

chapter x.19-22. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near." Notice that it is "the blood of Jesus", reminding us that He became man in order that He might shed His blood. Notice too that the exhortation is based upon the truth concerning the finished work of Christ as set forth in the earlier part of the chapter. In contrast with the many constantly repeated sacrifices which were offered under the law, we read, "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (vv.12-14).

Perfected for ever! What a wondrous thought that every believer, every one who has been cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, is perfected for ever! This is perfection as to our standing in Christ. As Christ is sitting down continuously at the right hand of God, so the believer is continuously perfected, and has liberty at all times to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Every believer is therefore a priest, free to enter into God's presence by a new and living way, inaugurated by His death — "new" as distinct from the way made by the sacrifices under the law, and "living" in that we have a living link with Him Who lives for us there. We have boldness to enter into the very sanctuary of God, and it is the precious blood of Jesus that gives us title to be there.

There is a further reference to the name of Jesus in chapter xii., where we have the exhortation, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of faith." We are first bidden to cast aside whatever hinders us in running on with endurance in the path of faith, whether that hindrance be a sin or merely a weight. Jesus Himself is brought forward as the great Example: He is the beginner and finisher of faith. He ran the whole course from beginning to end without a single faltering step, and having endured the cross, despising the shame, He is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. This is the One we are to have our eye upon: "looking steadfastly on Jesus, the leader and completer of faith" (J.N.D.). The word Author or Leader is the same as in

chapter ii., the "Captain of our salvation". He is the source of power for His people, for He is leading them on, and He gives them power to follow. He is also the Perfecter of the path of faith, the One Who has brought it to full completion; for He has gone on high, and as surely as He is there we shall finish our course too.

The final occurrence of the personal, human name is in the last chapter. "Wherefore Jesus also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (xiii.12-13). The allusion here is to the sin offering, the blood of which was brought into the sanctuary, while the body was taken outside the camp of Israel and burnt. In fulfilment of this type Jesus suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem, but His blood has spoken in the heavenly sanctuary. This gives us a two-fold privilege: on the one hand, liberty to enter in within the veil, into heaven itself (chapter x.), and on the other, identification with our rejected Lord without the camp. His was a place of shame and reproach. Let us challenge ourselves: how far are we prepared to follow Him in it? Notice that it is not a command, but an exhortation. In the tenth chapter it was "*Let us draw near*": here it is "*Let us go forth unto Him*". The whole question of separation is settled for us by this, in that we go forth "unto Him". The Lord is still in the outside place — outside all human and religious organisation, and it is our privilege to identify ourselves with Him in that place of reproach. We go forth unto Him, and it is His presence that marks the separation from everything that is not of Him.

What a precious privilege this is! May we enter more and more into the blessedness of drawing near into God's presence by the blood of Jesus, and of going forth unto Him in the outside place bearing His reproach.

*"Jesu is worthy to receive
Honour and power divine:
And blessings more than we can give
Be, Lord, for ever Thine."*

R. A. CREETH

ALONE WITH GOD — V

LIFTED ABOVE DISCOURAGEMENT

It is not always easy to be hopeful and courageous in depressing circumstances. Life at times seems drab and we rebel against the disciplines it requires, not always because of their hardness, but because much of it appears to be so unnecessary. At times the pettiness of ordinary living weighs us down. Sometimes it is the disappointments of our service for the Lord which rest heavily upon us. Who is there who has not longed to be free from the humdrum of ordinary things so that he might be employed in nobler pursuits?

The Monotony of the Commonplace

“Why should I live in this way?”, we may ask. This continual daily struggle with uncongenial work and unresponsive colleagues; this constant narrowing down of thought and effort to the mundane task of providing the essentials of life; this weary, monotonous business of earning a living — why does God tie me down like this?

The answer to these, as to many other questions, is to be found when we are “alone with God”. If we go to God in the secret place with questionings like these we shall find His answer, just as He gave it to Israel by Moses so long ago, “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no” (Deut. viii.2). In that place of quiet meditation and prayer it will be discovered that what we call the monotony of everyday is meant to do two things for us. First to “humble us”, and then to “prove us”, and all this is part of the discipline of the Lord. “It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. iv.2); and the daily round and common task are designed to make us content and faithful in lowly things.

Who is there who is not eager to rise above the commonplace and do great things? Such aspirations are common to most men and our pride and complacency are flattered when we are asked to do some special service. But God knows us better

than we do ourselves, and His purpose in giving us ordinary things to do is to rid us of this pride so that our service will be humble and unostentatious.

The discipline of the Lord is also meant to "prove us" whether we will keep His commandments or not. In other words to see whether we are seeking to do His will, or following our own inclinations. There are few who will set themselves humbly to do the will of God without some ulterior motive. When we long for something better in life than what is God's present will for us, we are doing nothing better than day-dreaming, and the souls of men are not won this way, nor is the Kingdom of God extended. To have bright ideas of what might be made of life is not to make it so.

What appears to be nothing less than a drab daily routine is transformed for us the moment we get alone with God in the quiet place and look at it objectively. Here, "in the secret of His presence" we discern His purposes of discipline.

*Earthly cares can never vex me,
Neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me,
To the secret place I go.*

The Ineffectiveness of Service

Another discouragement that comes to many is the disappointing, ineffectiveness of service for Christ. It is found in the apparent lack of success of all our efforts to promote the righteousness of God among men. "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then I would fly away, and be at rest" (Psalm lv.6). This was the cry, not of a worldly man, but of a godly man who was weary with the constant struggle against the forces of evil. There are many like this in the world to-day, those who are zealous for the righteousness of a holy God and yet saddened and discouraged by the constant advance of iniquity. For most it is not the intensity of the conflict that discourages, but the wearying length of it; the apparent hopelessness of it ever ending.

There is a remedy for such despondency and depression and

it is to be found to-day, as by the Psalmist, in the "sanctuary of God" (Psalm lxxiii.17). It is here where our view is re-orientated and disorder is turned into harmony. In the secret place of communion with God a different aspect is put on this timeless struggle. What is the answer — what has God to say? It is to turn our attention to Christ, to think of Him. The one answer to all our discouragements and despondency is Jesus Christ. It was said of Him before He came, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He hath set judgment in the earth" (Isaiah xlii.4). The prophecy has been fulfilled, and our Lord is waiting for His final victory; but waiting undiscouraged and undismayed, "Henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. x.13). "Oh, for wings," we cry, but if Christ had said that, where would we find all the blessings of redemption?

Yet sometimes the blessings of "wings" is given; not to enable us to escape from troubles, but to rise above them. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah xl.31). This is a promise for the present, and each part of it will be fulfilled at one time or another in the experience of him who has learnt to wait upon God, and to run with patience the race set before him.

One thing is certain, the many discouragements that we find as we go through life are certain to oppress us while we keep them to ourselves. But, as we bring them into the presence of God so they are changed; for here we learn to look upon them with His eyes, and to measure them by His standards.

T. D. SPICER

CHRISTIANS AWAKE!

Continued

The Lord's saying, "Some of them which stand here shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God", referred, as we have seen, to His transfiguration. The vision of the Kingdom which Peter, James and John saw was therefore exceptional.

Hence the Lord's words imply that the rest of the disciples would *not* see the Kingdom come in their lifetime.

After His resurrection, the disciples asked the Lord "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? Such were their thoughts. Let us note carefully His reply. First, the times and seasons were not given to Him to reveal: the Father reserved them to His own authority. Probably the Lord's earlier statement that even the Son knew not the day and hour of His coming is to be understood in this sense — that it was not given to Him to reveal.

Thus we are warned at the outset not to be concerned with the *time* of Christ's return. What then should be our concern? This is told us in His next words. He says, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Perhaps it is because the Church early lost its keenness to evangelize that the Lord's return was delayed. Perhaps the truth is that He will come when the time is ripe, and that this depends in part at least upon our carrying out His will.

When He had ascended out of their sight, the apostles saw two angels who assured them that "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go." What more confirmation can we need that His return to this world is sure?

NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

It was mentioned earlier that some confusion has been caused by identifying Christ's coming with the end of the world, a confusion that is tied up with the systematic spiritualizing of prophecies. In this system it is taken for granted that God has cast away His people (contrary to the precise words of the apostle in Rom. xi.2), and that all unfulfilled prophecies relating to them are to be understood as receiving fulfilment in the Church. Similarly scriptures which speak of the reign of Christ over Israel as David's Son (e.g. Isaiah ix.7; Luke i.32-33) are referred to His present exaltation. To this last mistake Christ's promise to the overcomer in Laodicea (Rev. iii.21) is sufficient answer: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit

with *Me in My throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." For He has not yet taken His own throne of *displayed* glory — see Matt. xxv.31.

TIMES OF THE GENTILES

This phrase is contained in the Lord's words already referred to in Luke xxi. He says (verse 24) "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles UNTIL the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." It refers to the prophecies of Daniel, where we find a succession of Gentile rulers established by God, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel ii.21 and 37-45). Until then the Kings of the house of David had ruled over Israel by divine appointment, but this rule was broken by Judah's captivity in Babylon. If then the times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar, it is evident that the ending of those times will mean the re-establishment of David's kingdom — but in Christ, David's Son and Lord. This is what the angel declared to Mary (Luke i.).

THE FREEDOM OF JERUSALEM

Is Jerusalem free now, or is it trodden down by the Gentiles?

In the days when Jesus walked its streets, Jerusalem was *not* free, but was under the domination of Rome. But at least it was peopled by Jews, and the Romans gave it as much liberty as they dared. But after its destruction by the Roman armies, it was never again free (from Israel's point of view) until the Jewish-Arab war of 1967. Then, as we know, Israel regained possession of all Jerusalem. Does this mean that the times of the Gentiles are over?

The Bible shows clearly that this freedom is only a temporary lull in its treading down. Events move so fast that these words may not be printed before Jerusalem is once more under oppression! Certainly we read in Revelation of another treading down (xi.2) before it is finally set free. However, it is plain that the long dispersion of the Jews of which the Lord spoke is coming to an end, so that the end of the times of the Gentiles must also be near.

THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL AS A NATION

Amid so many changes in world order, such as the dismemberment of the British and other empires, and the consequent rise of many colonial territories to independent status; the rise of Communist powers in various parts; the rapid modernisation of China, and the increase of violence everywhere, Israel's re-appearance as a nation in its ancient "promised land" has attracted far less attention than it deserves.

Yet these national changes provide no parallel whatever to Israel's re-emergence. Here we have a people, after nineteen centuries of world-wide dispersion, after many relentless persecutions, after constant effort on the part of many of themselves to become assimilated to other peoples, suddenly re-established in their ancient territory. Yet down the ages their very preservation has seemed a miracle. When the name "Israel" once again came to represent, not just ancient history, not just "a name in the Bible", but an existing world state, few people thought it would continue long. The Arabs, it was confidently claimed, would soon drive them into the sea!

But these are not the only remarkable features. For the restoration of Israel is foretold in the Bible, in many different passages, by different writers, in most clear and definite language, and in much detail. We have space for only a small selection of these prophecies, such as: "The Lord will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land" (Is.xiv.1); "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you from all countries, and I will bring you into your own land" (Ezek. xxxvi.24); "I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel, and they shall build again the waste cities, and inhabit them . . . and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (Amos ix.14, 15). This last passage is noteworthy in view of Arab claims today.

Now it is a fact that all down the centuries not only the world, but also Christians, have consistently refused to believe these prophecies. They have been explained away, "spiritual-

ised" and applied to the Church, but never believed. Never, that is, apart from a voice or two here and there, "crying in the wilderness". In the last century however God raised up some to teach that God meant what He said in His promises to His earthly people, and that we must take the promises literally.

THE TREES COMING INTO LEAF

Turning now from these Old Testament scriptures, let us look again at the Lord's words in Luke xxi. He adds a parable: "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled."

Now the fig tree is a well known symbol of the nation of Israel. Her lack of response to Christ's call to repentance is pictured by the Lord under the symbol of a barren fig tree, soon to be cut down if there was no improvement (Luke xiii.6). The actual barren fig tree which He found as He approached Jerusalem became an object lesson to the disciples, as the Lord laid a ban upon it, saying, "No fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever." And soon the tree withered away. It became a picture of that present fruitless generation of Israel, whose judgment was thus proclaimed. The withering foretold the end, for many centuries, of Israel's national existence.

Now in this parable in Luke xxi. her national re-emergence is pictured in the fig tree's bursting into leaf, and our attention is specially drawn to it. And there are other trees as well. Does not this foreshadow the striking revival of *nationalism* in the world today? Some readers, perhaps, having grown up to hear mention of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Lybia, Zambia, Tanzania and many others, to say nothing of Israel, may not realize that less than 30 years ago all of these were either non-existent names, or else represented mere colonial territories. Yes, the fig tree is shooting forth, and all the trees!

The beginning of the national revival for Israel we may see perhaps in the Balfour Declaration of 1916, when Britain pledged herself to make a national home for the Jews. Or else we may think of the actual beginning of the independent state

of Israel in 1948. The Lord's words, as we have interpreted them, declare that the generation which has seen the leaves begin to shoot forth will witness the coming of the Kingdom, that is, our present generation. This is the only dating we have of the Lord's appearing, and it is evident that it is far from giving us anything precise. It gives no hint of the year, let alone the day or the hour (Mk.xiii.32). But since the Lord has told us that this is not to be our concern, let us rather "be diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. iii.14). And if we count that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, it behoves us to be diligent in making known the Saviour. The door of salvation is still open wide, and many are entering. If western nations are unresponsive, many elsewhere are eager for the word of salvation. And the door is going to close soon.

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL AND THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

So far we have been engaged with the approach of the Lord's earthly kingdom, and this is tied up with Israel's restoration and repentance. But Scripture makes it plain that the hope of the Church is not on earth at all, for we wait for the Saviour, not to bring us into earthly blessing, but to take us to be with Himself in heaven. We shall indeed share in His earthly glory, but not as the subjects of His kingdom, but as those who reign *with Him*. The heavenly saints will accompany Him when He comes forth to put down His foes, and hence He will call them to Himself beforehand. Many Christians are not clear as to these things, and our next article in this series will D.V. be devoted to their exposition.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

We are told that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. What does coming short of the glory of God mean — how can man do otherwise, seeing he is but a man ?

ANSWER

God's glory is the display of Himself — of His greatness, His power and His love — it is not just a question of some visible radiance. Now man was the highest being of God's earthly creation, and was made in His image, after His likeness. That is, he was invested with God's authority over the lower creation, and was given a moral character like God's.

Man was thus a most wonderful being, and God's intention was that His own moral excellencies should be displayed in His creature. Love and gentleness, patience and goodness, along with the dependence and obedience to Him which his position demanded — living thus he would have displayed the glory of God. How far short he has come, and does come, needs no stressing here. Only one man — the Son of man, the Lord Jesus, ever fulfilled the divine intention for man.

We sometimes sing that in Jesus only could God fully trace a life divine below, and this is true. He was "that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John i.2). But it is also true that in Him only could God trace the full beauty and glory of a perfect human life. The wonder of His person is the combination and perfect harmony of the two.

EDITOR

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(Continued from inside back cover)

Thus the Rapture *precedes* the Lord's coming in power and glory, what is elsewhere called His appearing. And when He does appear, the heavenly saints are with Him. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war . . . And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

Thus He is accompanied by the armies of heaven — all the holy angels, and also the heavenly saints, clothed in fine linen, white and clean (verses 14 and 8), a tribute to what they have now become through the working of God's grace, "for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." It is what Paul prayed for, and looked forward to, "To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ *with* all His saints" (1 Thess. iii.13).

The heavenly saints are caught up to be *with* Christ; they come forth *with* Him to judge and to rule (cp. Rev.ii. 26 with xix.15); they will reign *with* Him throughout the millennium (xx.4,6).

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

TITLES OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is an interesting and profitable study to consider the titles of God as given to us in the New Testament. Much is involved in the various titles by which God has been pleased to make Himself known.

“The God of Glory”

Stephen uses this title when bearing witness before the Sanhedrin (Acts vii.2). The God of glory appeared to Abraham while his family were serving other gods in the land beyond the Euphrates (see Joshua xxiv.2). The call of the God of glory came to him and Abraham set out on his pilgrim path. Here no doubt the title contrasts the glory of the eternal, almighty God with the emptiness of the idols. His faith laid hold on this glorious One, so far outside and above the idolatrous world in which he dwelt. All for him was now found in the One Who had appeared to him, the God of glory. Similarly we too are called to glory and virtue, or as it may perhaps be rendered, *by* glory and virtue (2 Pet. i.3. JND). Through sin we come short of the glory of God (Rom. iii.23), but by that same glory we are called out of our lost condition to pursue glory as our objective. It is by God's own glory and excellence that the call comes to us, and virtue or spiritual energy is to characterise us all along the Christian pathway till it ends in glory. We are able to rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom. v.2), but we need the moral courage to refuse the gratification of the old nature as we pursue the path of faith which leads to the glory above.

“The God of Love”

This expression occurs in the apostle's message to the assembly at Corinth. “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the *God of love and peace* shall be with you” (2 Cor. xiii.11).

“*The God of love*”! How it brings before our minds the great heart of the blessed God! For as John tells us, God *is* love (see 1 John iv.8-10). And that love found its expression in the gift of

His own beloved Son with its twofold application to our desperate need as sinners. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." Thus God's love comes to us when dead in trespasses and sins, and quickens us, giving us new life through Him. But besides being morally and spiritually dead, we were guilty and sinful before God. Hence the apostle goes on to say, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *the propitiation for our sins.*" Thus Christ becomes both life and propitiation.

Notice that love and peace are linked together in this farewell message. It is "the God of love and peace." Let us then walk day by day in the enjoyment of this great love of our God, so that the apostle's desire for the Corinthians may be also true of us — "the God of love and peace shall be with you." For the God Who has expressed His love in such a wonderful way will withhold from us nothing which will be for our good and profit. For "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii.32).

"The God of Peace"

This expression occurs several times in the New Testament, twice in the closing chapters of Romans (xv.33; xvi.20). After warning the saints against false teachers and their subtle words, he says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." For God will never be satisfied till the peace which is according to His own mind reigns everywhere. What an encouragement to us that though evil may seem to be triumphing at the present time, yet Satan, the great instigator of evil, will be brought into subjection under our very feet shortly!

In Phil. iv. the apostle speaks of "the peace of God" and "the God of peace". We commence our Christian lives in the enjoyment of "peace with God" as those justified by the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. iv.25; v.1). The "peace of God" is

that practical peace that comes to us from the knowledge that our God is above all outward circumstances, and that He causes all things to co-operate for our ultimate good (Rom. viii. 28). Writing from prison the apostle could exhort the Philip-pians not to be anxious, but to spread out their needs before God, and he assures them that the peace of God would garrison their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (iv.6,7). Then after encouraging them to be occupied with the good and lovely things of verse 8, and to practise what they had seen exemplified in his own life, he adds, "and the God of peace shall be with you." As W.K. beautifully expresses it, "The God of peace' is far more than even 'the peace of God'. It is Himself the source; it is the enjoyment of His own blessed presence in this way. There is *relief* in having 'the peace of God' as the guard of our hearts and minds; there is *power* in having 'the God of peace' with us. Want we anything? Impossible."

There is another reference to the God of peace in the apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians. "Now the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we might perhaps have expected some other title; but the apostle's thought goes on to the final accomplishment of God's working for and in His people, when "no jarring note shall there discordant sound".

The final mention of the God of peace is found in the benediction of Heb. xiii.20-21. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight."

It is the *God of peace* Whom the apostle calls upon to bring to perfection His own work in the saints through Christ Jesus. The basis of the believer's peace is the blood of Christ, and God has declared His acceptance of that work by raising Him from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, which reaches back into eternity in the purpose of God and embraces in its scope of blessing all the redeemed, both the

earthly and the heavenly. The good Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep has been raised from the dead, and now lives as the Great Shepherd to care for the sheep. Let us see to it that there is no hindrance on our part to the gracious working of the God of peace to accomplish His purposes in our hearts and lives.

“The God of Hope”

This title occurs only in Rom. xv.13. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” What a wonderful title this is! He it is Who is both the source and the dispenser of hope. He it is Who will fill us with all joy and peace in believing, as we rest in childlike faith upon the verities of the faith already unfolded in the epistle, so that through the power of the Holy Ghost we abound in hope, like vessels overflowing in blessing to others.

Surely Abraham’s faith laid hold upon the God of hope. We read of him that against hope he believed in hope (Rom. iv.18). He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. May we follow the example of Abraham, and rely implicitly upon the word of the God of hope. Remember the exhortation of the psalmist, “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord” (Ps. xxxi.24).

We have two titles of God brought together in Rom. xv.5. “Now the *God of endurance and encouragement* give you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one accord and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (JND). Likemindedness should characterise the saints of God, but this can only be brought about as each believer has the mind of Christ, and all unite to the praise of God. Such oneness comes not from human effort, though in this world it is clear that endurance is called for, and certainly we need encouragement. Therefore the

apostle traces all back to the source—the God of endurance and encouragement.

There is a beautiful passage in Cor. 2 i.3-4. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Father of compassions, and *God of all encouragement*; Who encourages us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to encourage those who are in any tribulation whatever, through the encouragement with which we ourselves are comforted of God” (JND). How blessed it is that God turns the very trials and tribulation through which we pass to such blessing! We experience His comfort, and thus encouraged we are enabled to encourage others, who may be similarly tried and tested.

“The God of all Grace”

Peter brings his first epistle to a close with the following beautiful passage: “*The God of all grace*, Who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while, Himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground: to Him be the glory and the might for the ages of the ages (1 Pet. v.10,11). What a precious name this is—the God of all grace! Is He not able to make all grace abound toward us? (2 Cor. ix.8). What cause then for despondency and fear? The end is sure! The God of all grace has called us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus. The path of suffering is but for a little while, and He will Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, ground those whom He has called. Surely the God of all grace is sufficient for us until He brings us to His eternal glory. To such a God then we ascribe with the apostle glory and dominion for ever.

R. A. CREETH

THE DIVINE WORKERS XLVI

(John v.17)

Luke xix.11. “And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immedia-

tely appear". How often the Lord Jesus suffered misinterpretation of His actions and His words! The message of grace and the act that accompanied it was interpreted in a way that appealed to the crowd and to their interests as apart from those of God. Jesus had declared "Salvation is come to this house"—the house of one who was so widely known, and considered an outcast—a tax collector for Rome! It was clearly an exposition of Grace—the seeker for salvation has no resources of his own. To the crowd—so representative of the nation—the kingdom of God was synonymous with their re-possession of the land, freed from all controls. There was no thought of repentance toward God for offences so repugnant to His mind—so contrary to His holy purpose. So "He added and spake a parable". He is aware of their thoughts but there is another reason for His word picture. "He was nigh to Jerusalem."

He had told them He must suffer many things and be rejected of this generation yet they remained obsessed by their national aspirations. Now His story is of one who goes "into a far country" to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. It was indeed a "far country" to which this "high born" One was going—a country from which there was no human power to return. Moreover, it would be a kingdom **received** — not conquered and acquired. It would be willingly given to Him by One who had the right of gift and He would receive it on a righteous basis and return in possession of it.

There is an emphasis upon responsibility. Everyone hearing the story knew this — it was part of their language — their means of expression. "He called *ten* of his own bondmen and delivered them *ten minas*". Here was *collective responsibility* as shown in the ten words given to Moses at Sinai. It also showed individual accountability to God. Each of the ten received *one* mina and the word to him was "Trade while I am coming". Productivity from the use of the gift was possible and reward would follow. The parable pictures thus the blessings as well as the loss resulting from their known attitude to the One Who desired only their betterment.

There is also a sad indictment of the nation. "His citizens

hated him and sent a message after him, saying, We will not that this man should reign over us". The kingdom He would receive would be founded upon His death. Their refusal of Him left them without resource. They saw no need for His death but urged His restoration of the kingdom to *Israel* — for their own glory and well-being and not for the glory of God. The judgment of the guilty citizens is a sad certainty. Their message of rebellion was voiced in the death of His martyrs — the bitter persecution of His witnesses. It is sad to hear their condemnation as His enemies. The judgment of the habitable world is, of all things, a coming certainty yet it is difficult, if not impossible, to find reference to it in today's written or spoken word. "And when He had said these things, He went before, going up to Jerusalem". "He went on before" — there was no hesitation or reluctance in completing the work He had undertaken. On the eve of His betrayal He could say "Father, the hour is come . . . I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (John xvii.4). "He went on before" with complete foreknowledge of all that was before Him.

v.35. We see His lowly approach — "They cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon". He knew the certainty of the future fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy (Zech. ix.9), but God was pleased to produce in a multitude of human hearts at that time, for the honour of His Son, the spirit of rejoicing and "praise to God for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in Jehovah's name: in heaven peace, and glory in the highest". No one in human history has taken a place as lowly as His. In view of His rejection there could be *no peace on earth*. In view of His victory there *is peace in heaven* where, in exaltation, He sits at the right hand of God "having made peace by the blood of His cross". So is Jesus Himself the peace of every believing heart and, in the time of God's purpose, when His own are with Him, the peace proclaimed so long ago for earth will be brought in — at the coming of the King.

v.41. "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it." The influences of Jerusalem were evil, and

not alone in their hatred of Him. He was aware of their determination to bring about His death yet, as He drew near, the doom awaiting the city brought tears of human love and divine grief as He foretold the destruction of the city. Every word of His warning was fulfilled, after His crucifixion at the close of the following 37 years. In A.D.71 the siege by Titus began during the Passover. The city was crowded, and famine, then pestilence, followed, as history records. The slain choked the lanes, and the city and temple were in one great conflagration. Buildings were razed to their foundations whilst myriads perished. "For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall make a rampart about thee and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side, and level thee with the ground and thy children in thee; and not leave in thee stone upon stone; because thou knewest not the season of thy visitation".

v.45. "And He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought: Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves." Luke shows the evil, then present, that will result in the future destruction of the city. The false approach to God, the pretence of mere religion, met Jesus in the courts of the temple. It was there that the thieves pursued their trade. There were those who sold offerings and others who sold again to strangers who came from every part of Judea. Without an offering it was not permitted to enter the temple itself. The money changers, too, were there. From them the annual tribute for the service of the sanctuary must be obtained — the half shekel of Jewish currency. Roman currency was not accepted — it had to be used to pay taxes. The practices of these men were oppressive and fraudulent. In pretence of giving service, they united in compulsory extortion. Ever in full accord with the mind of God, Jesus used the written Word as His authority for the energy exerted in removing these profane persons. "It is written, And my house shall be a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers" (v.46.W.K.).

v.47. The word of God was heard from His lips day by day

in the temple. In contrast with their leaders, the people were deeply affected by it. The word made its appeal to the conscience of all and thus exposed the selfish will of those who held to their path of precedence and profit. They were without excuse for *all* the people heard His divine *realities* — the grace of God — His approach in mercy — the doors of the Kingdom of God wide open to repentance. It is surely unthinkable that His words to the ordinary people could be without effect. Their crowded attendance upon Him prevented the murderous intentions of their leaders. One thinks of the sorrow in many hearts when, later, the cry was enforced by prevailing voices “requiring that He might be crucified” (Luke xxiii.23). It is good to read the outcome of Peter’s declaration and testimony (Acts ii.) when “about three thousand souls” were added to the company of believers, among whom, one cannot refrain from believing, were many who had gathered so closely about Him eagerly hearing His message in the temple.

Edward T. Wood.

CHRISTIANS AWAKE!

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

In the first two articles in this series we concluded that the time when the Lord will, in the apostles’ words, restore again the kingdom to Israel, is rapidly approaching. The present time of the world’s darkness (called in 1 Thess.v. “the night”) will soon give place to the light of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Day will have dawned. But we ought to note what the Scripture says of that Day.

“That day will burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings” (Mal. iv.1,2).

Then He will reign over the repentant remnant of Israel,

delivering them from all their foes, and bringing to them all the blessings foretold by the prophets. His kingdom will extend also to the remaining Gentiles. But the promise to the church is quite different. It is to share the earthly dominion *with Him*, as He promised to the overcomer in Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. iii.21; see also xx.4).

It is vital to an understanding of the Church's position to grasp the fundamental distinction between the Church and Israel. The Church is one with Christ now, and her portion is in Him in the heavenly places where He is now (Eph. ii.6). Our citizenship, Paul tells us, is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour to come and change our lowly bodies into conformity with His own glorious body (Phil. iii.20). But Israel, even when restored and converted, will remain an earthly people while the earth itself remains, worshipping in an earthly temple, and enjoying to the full the blessings of the land which God promised to their fathers. Their blessing begins when the Lord's feet rest upon the mount of Olives (Zech. xiv.), whereas the Church (along with Old Testament saints) will be caught up to be with the Lord in heaven.

In that great prayer in the upper room (John xvii.) the Lord committed His own to the Father, and expressed His desire to have them with Him where He is, to behold the glory the Father has given Him. Consequently His promise was that if He went away He would come back and receive them to Himself, "that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv.3).

Conformably with this, the apostle Paul declared to the believers in Thessalonica that at the Lord's coming He would bring with Him those who had died in Him, so that they and those still living should be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv.16,17).

There are two features here we ought to pay special attention to: the resurrection and the place of meeting. It is the resurrection from among the dead — for the unsaved are not raised. Paul tells us that as we have borne the image of the "man of dust", i.e. Adam, the first man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man, i.e. the risen and glorified Jesus. "The second man", Paul says, "is the Lord from heaven". And so as He comes out of heaven to gather up His own redeemed, He transforms them into His own glorious image. The dead are first raised into immortal life, then the living are changed. The corruptible will put on incorruption, and the mortal will put on immortality. Death will be, not merely defeated, but swallowed up, in victory. But Scripture does not say that the Lord will come to earth to accomplish His victory, as He once stood by the graveside of Lazarus. There is nothing about the mount of Olives. No, the raised and the changed alike are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. And Paul adds those wonderful words, "And so shall we be ever with the Lord." With Him, and like Him, for ever. Truly a blessed hope!

WHO WILL SHARE THE "BLESSED HOPE"?

All the scriptures which we have quoted in this connection refer to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who constitute the Church. As believers they are justified by faith (Rom. v.1), being forgiven for His name's sake (1 John ii.12). Having believed, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. ii.13), and being led of the Spirit they are sons of God (Rom. viii.14), predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. viii.29). All then flows from faith, faith in God's Son, the Saviour Who died for them, and each believer is now kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (i.e. the final accomplishment of salvation) ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. i.5).

Hence the notion sometimes held that after a "general resurrection" the judgment will decide who are to be saved and who are lost is a denial of every characteristic Christian blessing. For there are two resurrections — the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment; but he that believes does not come into judgment, but is (already) passed from death unto life (John v.29,24). Hence he will be raised at the resurrection of life (John vi.40), that is, when the Lord comes for those that are His. The resurrection of judgment will take place a thousand years later (Rev. xx.5).

Another mistaken teaching is that when the Lord comes only the more devoted of His people still alive will be caught up. Apparently it is never taught that only the more devoted of believers who have died will be raised then!

But neither 1 Thess. iv. nor 1 Cor. xv. so much as hints at what is known as a "partial rapture" — the word "rapture" referring to the saints being "caught up" to be with Christ. The doctrine is apparently derived from scriptures such as Heb. ix. 28, "and unto them that look for Him shall He appear", and 2 Tim. iv.8, "A crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give . . . to all them that love His appearing." But in these scriptures there is certainly an implied exhortation to the believer to look for and love the Lord's appearing, but hardly a separation of believers into watchful and unwatchful. And as concerning a verse such as Rev. iii.3, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee", is it not clear that it marks off one who is no true believer at all, one who, in spite of his "name to live", was really "dead"?

WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE TAKE PLACE?

If we examine a scripture such as Matt. xxiv.27-31, describing the Lord's coming in power and glory, we must be struck by the fact that neither of the two features so prominent in 1 Thess. iv. and 1 Cor. xv. are present. There is no mention

of resurrection, and the "elect" are gathered together from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other, but this is evidently the atmospheric heavens where the winds move. There is no gathering of the elect *into* heaven to meet the Son of man. These elect are doubtless the elect of Israel, represented, probably, by those sealed in Rev. vii. Again, they are gathered together, but just as there is no resurrection of the dead, so so there is no change in the living. Hence this is quite a different scene from the Rapture, and, we believe, a later one.

Further light on this subject is found in Revelation. In chapter 1 we are shown the Lord walking among the seven golden lampstands which symbolise seven representative churches on earth. In chapters 2 and 3 we have His messages sent to them, messages of encouragement or reproof. Then in chapter 4 a door is opened in heaven. From heaven, in the following chapters, judgments are sent on earth, and earthly events are described; but one thing is conspicuously absent — there is no mention of Church or churches. There are saints on earth, but no churches. Is not this because the Church has been taken to heaven? But do we see her there?

In heaven John sees 24 "elders", crowned with crowns of victory, and seated on thrones (not merely "seats" as in the A.V.) around the divine throne. Here surely are the heavenly saints, at rest in the presence of God as those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. They are no longer in scenes of earthly conflict.

(Continued inside front cover)

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