

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LXV

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A Magazine for Believers

(Continued from inside back cover)

knew He was the Lord. Yet He answers gently, with no hint of rebuke, but quietly correcting her: "Martha, Martha, you are burdened and worried about many things, but one thing is needful. Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

It was the answer of One meek and lowly in heart, who was yet able both to defend Mary and show Martha the better way. But the affront to His own dignity He ignored.

3. The trial before the High Priest (John xviii.19-23)

The high priest had no right to demand that Jesus answer questions about His disciples and His doctrine, because it was the function of witnesses to bring this out. Hence when the Lord answered "Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I said unto them: behold, they know what I said," He was legally as well as morally in the right. Thus the pretended indignation of the officer who slapped His face saying, "Answerest thou the high priest so?" was both uncalled for, and itself illegal.

Few things more easily rouse a man to anger than a slap on the face, but the Lord of glory protested quietly, saying "If I have said something wrong, tell everyone here what it was. But if I am right in what I said, why do you hit me?" (TEV).

A Contrast

How differently the Lord acted where, not His own dignity, but the glory of God was in question, as when He cleansed the Temple! His actions on that occasion reminded His disciples of the scripture "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up".

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH

"the wall fell down flat" (Joshua vi.20)

"By faith the walls of Jericho

fell down, after they were

compassed about seven days" (Heb. xi.30)

It was in the will and purposes of God that the walls surrounding Jericho were to collapse; but in order to do so, Israel were to follow implicitly His directions for the conquest of the city. They were not to sit idly by, waiting for God to show His power. Such conduct would not have been the fruit of faith but of presumption. Although the victory is His, God uses human means to bring down the enemy, and all the while the glory is His alone.

Prescribed Means

But what are the means He uses? At Jericho there was the exhibition of the Ark of the Covenant. It was a strange procession. First the men of war, who were followed by seven priests blowing on trumpets of rams' horns, finally came the Ark of the Covenant and behind it the mass of the people. So, we read, they compassed the city six days. Once each day they marched round Jericho; not a sword was drawn, not a word was spoken; only the white-robed priests blew with the trumpets. In the centre of it all came an object covered with a blue cloth, the Ark; the symbol of God's presence with His people, and the centre of the worship of both priests and people.

Surely, as this unusual retinue marched around Jericho day after day, the men of Jericho must have said, as the enemies of God must have said in a later day, "what do these feeble Jews . . . will they make an end in a day?" (Nehemiah iv.2). And yet, perhaps some awe fell upon them; some would recall how these people had crossed the torrent of Jordan, and the stories that had reached them of their passing through the Red Sea.

At last the word of command was given, on the seventh day the walls were circumscribed not once, but seven times, and at the completion of the last circuit, when the priests

blew a long blast with the trumpets, the people shouted with a great shout; and "the wall fell down flat". Man used the prescribed means; God put forth the promised might; the result was accomplished. The means may have seemed utterly inadequate, but in the divine order they were used to bring down the pride of Jericho and lay its towers in the dust.

This is still God's method today. Means which to the world seem ridiculous and utterly inadequate are the things which He uses to accomplish His purposes of grace. The uplifting and exhibition of a crucified Saviour; the preaching of the blood of the Cross, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. i.23); these are the means through God of the "pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God . . ." (2 Cor. x.4,5). Has it not always been so? Has He not ever chosen "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise", and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty"? Trace a few of His mighty acts. What was the chosen weapon to convince Pharaoh? A rod in Moses' hand. What healed the dying Israelites? A serpent of brass on a pole. Do you know the children's chorus? —

Shamgar had an ox-goad, David had a sling.

Dorcas had a needle and Rahab had some string.

It makes the point crystal clear.

In these days of civilization, enlightenment, higher education, and modern philosophy (often falsely so called), evangelical preaching is often looked down upon; and the world at large that calls itself Christian, and cannot do without a religion, either for respectability or as a salve to the conscience, calls for teaching that is comfortable and not disturbing. The demand today is for situations that please, sensuous ritual, outward exhibitions that catch the eye, and discourses that gratify the intellect without probing or meeting the needs of the heart. We are told that "the old, old story of Jesus and His love" is outdated and irrelevant. But it is the business and glory of true servants to exalt

Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. "Enticing words of man's wisdom" and "excellence of speech", though God may sometimes use them, are not the secret of power. "Jesus only" must be the motto and the theme, or else they labour in vain.

Therefore, though many may despise the frequent repetition of the "old, old story", let us resolve to know nothing else. There is no real monotony in the story of the Cross. All the Scriptures testify of Christ. He can never be exhausted, there is enough in Him to satisfy every fresh desire of the soul. The exaltation of the crucified Christ will never be fashionable, and the Gospel will sound foolish to men; but it is by these means that God is glorified; for the Christ of Whom we preach and testify is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i.24).

By Faith . . .

The call is to work and walk *in faith*. The Ark was carried around Jericho in faith, the trumpets were blown in faith, the great shout was given in faith; for we read in the letter to the Hebrews "by faith", all these things happened. Joshua, the priests, the men of war, all believed God and trusted in His power. Therefore, they acted as they did; it was a shout of triumphant faith that burst from the host of Israel. They did not wait to see God's power exerted before they would shout. They were "strong in faith, giving glory to God"; and according to their faith, so it was unto them.

"*By faith* the walls of Jericho fell down."

This was the secret of the great victory. Moreover, this is the only way to win victory still. If we expect to see no results we shall see none; it is when we "believe", that we "see the glory of God". The power of God is no less in this twentieth century than it was in the days of Joshua; but it is the law of His kingdom that this power shall be put forth in proportion to the faith of His servants. Where there is distrust and doubt He does not work; or, if He does in His gracious sovereignty, it is but a little that is accomplished when compared with the results that a large, strong faith

will ensure. The fight in which the armies of Jesus Christ are engaged is essentially the "fight of faith". It is one carried on, not by human energy, but by trust and divine power.

. . . and Patience

But faith goes hand in hand with patience. We are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews vi.12). While faith expects the blessing it must yet wait the appointed time, and that time is not always known to us. There is an appointed time for each heart to yield to Christ; that there is a moment fixed from all eternity when the last evil shall be brought down we know well, but when that time shall come is not revealed to us.

We learn from the incident before us that, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, *after they were compassed about seven days*".

The number seven, as we learn from many passages of Scripture, is constantly used to describe anything to which the idea of fulness or completeness is attached. The seven days in which the Israelites were to compass the city was, therefore, the period during which the patience of the people was to be exercised. At the end, their patience having had its "perfect work", their faith was to receive the accomplishment of the promise.

Sometimes we are apt to forget that the same principle applies to spiritual warfare and spiritual husbandry, and as a consequence we grow disheartened and discouraged because great results for which we long and expect do not come immediately. But God's delays are not denials. When Abraham received the promise of God he believed it, though it took years for it to be fulfilled; but "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise". It is no less our part and our privilege to wait God's time, not in faithless despair, but in patient hope, looking for the fulfilment at the moment when He sees best to give the blessing. Therefore, "let patience have her perfect work". True faith can say, "my times are in Thy hand".

The promise is still true, "*in due season* we shall reap if we faint not", and the command remains, "cast thy bread upon the waters and thou shalt find it after *many days*".

Be not discouraged because, in the exercise of patience, God tarries and your faith is tried. Run the race that is set before you "with patience, looking unto Jesus"; never mind, though, like the Israelites you go over the same ground day after day and even seven times in one day. The Captain of our salvation cannot be defeated in the end.

It is a principle in the Kingdom of God that the results which He purposes to accomplish in gathering out a people to His Name shall, as a rule, be accomplished by divine power working through human, and therefore, weak instruments. The gracious purpose of our Father is to permit us to be the instruments in His hands, so winning souls to Christ. We are to go forward using the means that He has been pleased to ordain, knowing that the "power belongeth unto God", but that to us it belongs to preach the Gospel to every creature.

T. D. SPICER

THE HOLY AND THE TRUE

It is one of the characteristics of the last days that men resist the truth by imitating it (2 Tim. iii.8). Just as the magicians of Egypt withstood Moses by imitating him as far as possible, so today men are led on by Satan to bring out doctrines that are but imitations of the truth, yet are often so close to it that many are deceived. And if this is true of the great doctrines of Christianity, it is true, alas, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. Many would acknowledge the moral beauty of His manhood, but deny His deity.

Children are taught in schools that Christianity is but one of a number of "comparative religions", and Jesus is presented merely as a leader to be followed, while His lordship and deity are entirely overlooked. How zealous, therefore, we should be to instruct our young people in the basic truths of Christianity, laying stress above all upon the deity of our adorable and only Lord.

It has been wisely said that the great safeguard against all that is false is the knowledge of that which is true. How emphatically the apostle John expresses the implicit confidence of the believer when he says, "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John v.20). This is followed by a solemn warning: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols". He says in effect, Do not allow any misrepresentation of the truth concerning the person of Christ, the true God, the Eternal Life, to find a place in your heart. An idol is a substitute, a false god put in place of the true. Let us beware of all falsifications, and hold fast what is true.

Let us now look at certain scriptures which will help us to get a clearer perception of the perfections and glory of the One who is indeed the Holy and the True.

He is the Truth

Our Lord Himself says in John xiv.6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". He is therefore the way to the Father, the truth about the Father, and the energy of life in which the Father is known. As the truth He manifests what God the Father is, as He says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". Moreover as in Adam we see fallen man, so in Jesus we see what man is according to the thoughts and purposes of God.

He is the True Light

In John i.9 we read, "The true light is that which, coming into the world, lightens every man". The Baptist was a burning and shining lamp bearing witness to the One who was coming; but the True Light, coming into the world, lightens every man. It is not that every man is enlightened, but He is the source of light, the sun that shines upon all universally, and is not confined to one race alone. Christ Himself is the true light, and we can follow Him in perfect confidence. He says "I am the light of the world; he that follow-

eth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii.12).

He is the True Bread

When the people came to the Lord asking for a sign that they might see and believe, they spoke of their fathers eating manna in the desert. The Lord answered that it was not Moses who provided the bread from heaven, but His Father was giving them the true bread out of heaven (John vi.32). The true bread, the bread of God, is Jesus Himself who comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world. These two characteristics mark Him out as a divine Person, yet a man here below, the Bread of God able to impart life, and to satisfy all that need Him. In natural life bread only sustains life, in no sense gives it. Spiritually Jesus as the True Bread is both the giver and sustainer of life. There is eternal life and abiding satisfaction in Him, for He says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst".

He is the True Vine

When the Lord said, "I am the true vine" (John xv.), He was adopting a figure which in the Old Testament had been applied to Israel. See Is. v.1-7; Ps. lxxx.8-18. Israel as the vine brought forth nothing but wild and worthless grapes. God looked for good fruit, but found none. Israel must now be set aside, and the Lord presents Himself as the true and only source of fruit-bearing for God in the earth, and graciously associates His disciples with Himself. He was the true vine, they were the branches, and they must abide in Him if they were to be fruitful for God.

The same principle applies to us today. It is only as we walk in dependence upon Him and enjoy communion with Him that we shall bear fruit. We may ask, what is this fruit that God is looking for? Surely it is the expression of Christ in those that are His. It is our calling to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control (Gal. v.22-23). All

these qualities were displayed in perfection in Christ as He passed in lowliness through this world. What a privilege it is for us, as those abiding in Him, to exhibit the graces and character of Christ in our daily life! This can only be as we are vitally connected with the True Vine and abide in Him.

He is the Holy and the True

This is how the Lord presents Himself to the church at Philadelphia. He says, "These things says the holy, the true; he that has the key of David, he who opens and no-one shall shut, and shuts and no-one shall open" (Rev. iii.7). Thus the Lord is seen here in His moral perfections rather than in His official glories — He is the Holy and the True. How suited to the weak, dependent but devoted saints at Philadelphia! Not only is He intrinsically holy, but He is true in every way, true to God, and true to His own word. If, however, He presents Himself to His saints in His moral perfections, it is so that they should become morally like Him. His desire is that amidst increasing evil in the professing church there should be those who are holy and true in practice, displaying in their lives the character of Christ Himself.

He is the True Witness

To the Church of the Laodiceans the Lord presents Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii.14). As the Amen, He is the One in whom all the promises of God have been taken up and fulfilled to God's eternal glory. As the faithful and true witness, it was His great delight to bear witness to the One who sent Him. He loved the Father, and came to do the Father's will. He could say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work". And looking back upon His path of service, He could say in prayer to His Father, "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world . . . I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it" (John xvii.6,26).

This presentation of Himself as the faithful and true witness is in contrast with the sad failure of the church as a testimony in this world. What a comfort to know that He abides faithful and true, when so much that was set up to be a bright witness to Him in this dark world has become so heartless and indifferent that it has to be utterly repudiated!

We need to be occupied with the Lord Jesus as the faithful and true witness if we are to be kept from the spirit of Laodicean lukewarmness. As we contemplate the perfections and moral glories of God's blessed Son, as He walked here among men, we shall see Satan's attacks upon Him in their true colours and our hearts will be drawn out to Him in adoration and affection.

He is the True God

Let us look again at 1 John v.20. Of all the apostles John entered most deeply into the nature of God, and he dwells much both upon the Lord's eternal being and His manhood. He would establish the believer in faith and confidence, and enable him to rise above the corrupt doctrines of Christendom. Our safeguard then is the knowledge that we are in the unfailing security of the true God by being in His Son. John's purpose in writing the epistle was to "show unto us that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (chap. i.2). Now in closing the epistle he says, "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life". What a remarkable testimony to the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the eternal security of the believer!

Let us sum up this sevenfold presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the truth; let us believe His testimony and treasure His words. He is the true Light: let us find in Him the illumination and guidance we need. He is the true Bread: let us feast upon Him, and find our constant satisfaction in Him. He is the Holy and the True: let us seek to be holy and true in all our ways. He is the faithful and true witness: let us be occupied with His moral glories so that we become increasingly devoted to Him. He is the true

God, of equal honour with the Father and equally the object of worship: let us adore Him.

R. A. CREETH

THE CHERUBIM AND THE FLAME

He (Jehovah) drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Genesis iii.24).

In J.N.D.'s translation, we read "Jehovah set the Cherubim, and the flame of the flashing sword, toward the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way of the tree of life".

The Hebrew word for "set", or as in King James version "placed", is "shakan", of which Young's concordance gives the meaning as "to tabernacle, cause to settle down". Newbury's Bible has a note, "made to dwell".

One of the ways in which Jehovah manifests His presence is by fire. He appeared to Moses "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush". In a pillar of fire He led the Israelites by night out of Egypt. The Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in fire. "Jehovah spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire" (Deut. iv.12, 15, 33, 36). His appearance in association with the Cherubim in Ezekiel i. is striking. "I saw as the colour of amber as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upwards, and from the appearance of his loins even downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord".

The Cherubim were the celestial attendants associated with the supreme presence of Jehovah. Nowhere do we find them wielding the sword of justice. In flying, the Lord rode upon a Cherub (Ps. xviii.10). In a cry for salvation He is applied to as "Thou that dwellest between the Cherubim, shine forth" (Ps. lxxx.1-3). In Ezekiel's temple Cherubim are linked with palm trees, a symbol of joy and peace (xli.18, and see Lev. xxiii.40) and in the Epistle to the Hebrews they are called the Cherubim of glory.

When He takes up the reins of government, "He sitteth between the Cherubim" (Ps. xcix.1). Then in the most holy place of the Tabernacle they are seen in association with the golden *mercy-seat*, that was placed above upon the ark, and on which on Israel's day of atonement, the blood of the sacrificial victim met their eyes as they gazed down upon the *mercy-seat*, from which Jehovah's voice would be heard communing with Moses in grace, not in judgment (Ex. xxv.17-22; Lev.xvi.15). They were thus intimately associated with mercy in the holy of holies!

Keeping the way of the tree of life was an act of mercy, not of judgment. In eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam brought upon himself the judgment threatened, "Dying, thou shalt die". To be always living a sinner (had he then eaten of the tree of life), still sinning, would be a terrible doom for him.

Our God is the God of all grace. He did not forsake Adam after driving him from Eden, but at the east of the garden He manifested His presence in a like manner to when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush, by the Flame of the flashing sword tabernacling between the Cherubim at Eden.

This was a place to which Man might approach and find acceptance, if accompanied by a suitable sacrifice. It was also the place from which the voice of the Lord was heard, holy ground to be approached with unshod feet.

It would be to this place that both Cain and Abel brought their offerings. The fact that they "brought" indicates an appointed place to which to bring, as with Israel (Deut. xii.5, 6, 11). Then if analogy might teach, the Lord signified His approval of Abel's offering by the holy fire from between the Cherubim consuming it, as Lev. ix.24; 2 Chron. vii.1; 1 Chron. xxi.26. Thus God testified as to his gift, and he obtained witness that he was righteous (Heb. xi.4). That the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering aroused the wrath of Cain against both God and Abel. It is good to note how God so graciously condescended to reason with Cain, pointing out how he too might find acceptance. "If

thou doest not well, a sin-offering croucheth at the door". (The Hebrew word may mean either sin or sin-offering). This seems to imply that there at the entrance to Eden was an offering within his reach.

Instead of taking advantage of it, Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, that is, from where He tabernacled at Eden between the Cherubim.

Eve when one hundred and thirty years old seems to be grieving over the death of Abel as a recent event. This would seem to indicate that Abel must have been about one hundred and twenty five years of age when slain by Cain.

Both might have had large families, which explains Cain's words, "everyone that findeth me shall slay me" (Gen.iv.14). Fearing a vendetta with his brother's family and having no confidence in God's protective mark he evidently takes his tribe with him eastwards and builds a city, with walls perhaps to keep out an enemy.

J. A. HARROW

GLIMPSES OF THE MEEKNESS AND LOWLINESS OF CHRIST

1. His Baptism

John the Baptist had done his work well, and crowds of people from Judaea and Jerusalem had obeyed his call to repent. As a sign of their repentance they were baptized by him in Jordan, so joining those awaiting the appearance of Messiah.

Now it was clear to John that Christ must have the foremost place, as he himself expressed it, "He must increase, but I must decrease". He saw the success of his mission in his own eclipse.

When Jesus came to John to be baptized he objected, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?". But the Lord Jesus insisted, saying, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness".

This is one of those utterly unexpected touches about the Lord Jesus. How entirely outside the scope of man's

thoughts! "Suffer it," He says, so acknowledging that John's protest was a valid one; but what was the "righteousness" that He would fulfil?

First of all, did He not desire to show Israel what was the right path for them to follow — the path of repentance? That was the only "righteousness" they could possibly have. And though He had no need of repentance, yet in His lowly grace He sought to associate Himself, not with the haughty Pharisees who ignored John, but with those who acknowledged their need of forgiveness and mercy.

Then also, His action showed the utmost graciousness towards John himself. If His faithful forerunner was to be set aside now that his work was done, Jesus will put the stamp of His approval on John's testimony in the most emphatic way possible — by Himself submitting to be baptized by him. John's "baptismal roll" as it were, was headed by the most illustrious name of all — Jesus, the Son of God!

The astonishing lowliness of this gracious act can but draw from us admiration and worship: He who had come down from heavenly glory allowing His servant to put Him beneath the water, so as to show the way of righteousness to His people.

2. Martha and Mary (Luke x.38-42)

It is not the whole of this story, not its full significance, that we would now look at, but just the Master's response to Martha.

Martha was incensed because her sister Mary was listening to the Lord's teaching instead of helping her to prepare the feast, and at last, unable to contain herself any longer, she came to Him, no doubt with reproachful look and tone, to say, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her therefore to help me".

If there had been the slightest trace of human pride in the blessed Lord, we know by our own feelings the sharp retort which such words as Martha's would have called forth. For even if she did not yet fully understand His divine glory she

(Continued inside front cover)

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(Gen. xxv.23), and brought to pass in accord with Esau's own desert would not now be changed.

Of course in regard to man the usual meaning of repentance is a change of mind, or rather of his whole attitude, towards God and his own sins. Whereas man naturally seeks to justify himself, a repentant sinner acknowledges his guilt and the righteousness of God's condemnation of himself. While a man may thus repent of a single sin, the effect of the Gospel received into the heart is to reveal that the whole course of his life has been contrary to God. To submit to this revelation, to acknowledge his need of God's mercy and forgiveness, is true repentance — repentance towards God, as Paul expresses it.

Now we can see readily that such repentance is impossible apart from faith. For faith comes by a report, and the report by God's word (Rom. x.17), and it is this submission to God's message, however dimly it is understood which constitutes the first step of faith. To submit to God as One not only righteous but willing to show mercy opens the heart to receive the fuller revelations of the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour.

It is thus idle to inquire whether faith or repentance comes first in a man's experience, for though these are distinct in themselves, in regard to the salvation of a sinner they are like the two faces of a coin — distinct but inseparable. If faith meant merely belief in the existence of God, we know that the demons share in this and tremble in consequence. But faith according to the scripture we have quoted means acceptance of God's message — a message of salvation, of mercy and reconciliation to God. E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

“Servant of the LORD” is the title often given to Moses in the Old Testament, and it accords with the fact that as an instrument in God’s hand he carried out the commands of God with all but unblemished obedience and faithfulness. In fact the figure of Moses the man is rather obscured by this. Nevertheless he did not arrive at this stature quickly.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews introduces him as one in whom the faith of his parents was demonstrated. “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” It was a clear case of doing God’s will rather than man’s, for they knew that it was God’s will that the child should be brought up to know and serve Him, not to be left to perish. Their decision to hide him was strengthened by seeing what a beautiful child he was (Ex. ii.2). The subsequent plan of placing him in an ark on the river, near the place where the daughter of Pharaoh was wont to wash was doubtless conceived and carried out in the same spirit of faith and trust in God. The plan worked perfectly, with Miriam hiding near in order to offer to find the princess a Hebrew nurse when she had discovered the baby.

So was Moses brought up by his own parents in those vital early years, and learned from them the story of God’s promises to Israel, and His purpose to deliver them from bondage in due time. This we may be sure is what they did.

So when his mother gave him to Pharaoh’s daughter, who adopted him as her own son, he was able to grow to manhood in safety in Egypt, yet with the secret of God in his possession. It is a heartening story of how faith in God, and obedience to His known will, can be used by Him to carry out purposes of blessing of which we may have no inkling at the time.

MOSES IN EGYPT

Moses’ life as a prince of Egypt is described briefly by Stephen in Acts vi., where he says that “Moses was learned in

all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." The details which Josephus gives of these mighty deeds may or may not be true, but the picture of Moses as one having excellent standing in Egypt accords well with the fact that until he was 40 he seems to have done nothing towards the relief of his afflicted brethren.

We can well imagine the conflict in his mind. He had tasted the glory of this world, and perhaps greater glory lay before him. But he knew that he really belonged to that oppressed people of Israel, whose continued growth in numbers in spite of oppression was such a headache to Pharaoh. But these were the people of God — the family of Abraham — the inheritors of those wonderful promises.

We are told in Exodus that he went out to his brethren and looked on their burdens. It would seem that he had not completely made up his mind what to do. But when he saw an Egyptian striking an Israelite, he defended him and, in result, killed the Egyptian, having looked to see that there were no spectators. Then next day he went again, and sought to reconcile two Israelites who were fighting, but the aggressor turned on him saying "Who made you a ruler or judge over us? Will you kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?"

Was it that a half-formed resolution to espouse his people's cause was brought to the point of action when he saw how they were treated? However, he only found that they rejected his intervention. His killing of the Egyptian became known to Pharaoh, and all that Moses could do was to flee.

The fact is, that it was not God's time to deliver Israel, and it was not God's way. Moses' military prowess could not do it, but only God's almighty power. To Moses the result seemed utter disaster, and we can easily see how mistaken his effort had been. But God saw the faith that moved him: faith in God's promises which led him to associate himself with God's people, and therefore in principle to abandon his position as son of Pharaoh's daughter. In the words of Hebrews xi., "By faith Moses, when he was come to years.

refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

Let us pause to consider the alternative, if Moses had clung to his exalted position. God would have found another deliverer for Israel (see Esther iv.14), but who would now remember Moses? His earthly glory would have vanished like a vapour. As it is, even the world counts Moses as one of its greatest men, and his eternal reward we know is assured.

MOSES IN MIDIAN

God, who makes all things work together for good to those who love Him, used this failure of Moses to separate him completely from Egypt, so that in God's school he might learn lessons that he could never have learned there.

He fled to Midian, and there became a shepherd for Jethro, a priest of Midian, one of whose daughters he married. There followed forty years of quiet, uneventful life in complete obscurity. All his abilities, all his sacrifices, all his hopes of serving his people, had come down to this. No doubt he wondered at God's ways, as we so often do, and did not realise that his real life was about to begin! For the man of quick temper and self-confidence had now become "the meekest man of all the earth" (Num. xii.3), and self-distrusting, as we see when God called him to go back to Egypt. He was now ready for God to use. Instead of the quick victories he had brought about in the service of Egypt (if Josephus is to be trusted) he had learnt the patience of a shepherd, which he was to need badly as the shepherd of Israel.

THE BURNING BUSH

God's revelation of Himself to Moses took place within sight of Mount Sinai, where he had led the flock "to the backside of the desert". Evidently there was some grazing there, as on a later occasion God commanded that no flocks or herds should feed there.

He saw a bush burning with fire but not consumed — a sign of the divine presence that was full of meaning. A fire that needed no fuel to sustain it was an apt symbol of the self-existent One — presently to name Himself “I AM”, while the fire spoke of intense energy and power. Did the lowly bush tell of Israel, among whom the living God intended to make His dwelling?

As Moses drew near God called him by name, and told him to come no nearer, but to remove his shoes, for he stood upon holy ground. Then Jehovah announced Himself as “the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”, causing Moses to hide his face. The full meaning of these words was brought out by the Lord Jesus, as that He is the God of the living, not of the dead. The patriarchs had passed from the sight of men, but to God they still lived, and the things they had hoped for and believed in were safe in His keeping. He was still their God.

Then Jehovah went on to reveal His knowledge of His people and their sufferings, and stating “I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land unto a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Gracious words! Words too good to be true! And before Moses could take in their stupendous import, the Lord added, “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” But the task which, forty years before, Moses had deemed himself eminently fitted for, now filled him with dismay. He says to God, “Who am I, that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” To which the Lord answered, “Certainly I will be with thee.”

These words remind us of the words of the Lord Jesus when commanding His apostles to make disciples of all nations. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” We often take these words as words of comfort, as indeed they are; but there is much more in them than

comfort. They are the assurance of His personal, powerful backing in the task of making disciples, and how abundantly has their truth been verified!

Moses was slow in taking in the amazing fact that God Himself was sponsoring His people's cause; and his mind sought to explore, after the fashion of a military leader, all the difficulties and snags he might meet. These difficulties God answered, one by one, with unfailing patience. And He added one which Moses would have thought quite insuperable, namely Pharaoh's positive refusal to let the people go.

First Moses asked how he should answer the Israelites when they demanded to know by what name the God of their fathers should be known, and received the astonishing reply "Say that I AM hath sent me unto you." It was a fitting name for the One who spoke from the burning bush.

Next he brought out his fear that the people would not believe that God had really met with him. God answered by giving him three miracles, or "signs" that he was to perform. First the rod in Moses' hand became a snake when he threw it down. Told by God to take it by the tail, Moses did so and it became a rod in his hand — a sign of the mastery God was giving him over the power of Satan in Pharaoh. A sign to Israel it was, but also a sign to Moses, for when with his own rod he had sought to deliver Israel, he did but provoke the power of Satan (i.e. Pharaoh) against himself, and fled from it. But now, under God's direction he is able to demonstrate the impotence of Satan: the serpent becomes a rod of power in his hand!

In the second sign, Moses' hand, after being put inside his garment and withdrawn, came out leprous as snow; but being inserted and again withdrawn, was perfectly healed. The first act seems to show Moses the true condition of his own heart as full of sin. But God was able to heal him and use him.

The third sign he did not need till he stood before Pharaoh.

It is beautiful to see that Moses received no kind of rebuke

for each difficulty that he raised, and the Lord Jesus is surely not less ready today to allow, or encourage His servants to bring to Him all the difficulties they meet or anticipate in His service. However, the next objection seems to be more of an excuse for not going, and the Lord dealt shortly with it.

Moses, the mighty in word as well as in deed, complains that he had never been eloquent, and had not become so since God had spoken to him! Alas, he was eloquent enough in setting out his difficulties! So the Lord reminds him that it was He who had made man's mouth; Moses was therefore to go, and God would teach him the words to utter.

Of course the real obstacle then became clear — Moses' unwillingness to do the Lord's will at all. He says in effect, "Lord, send anyone you like, but not me." And for the first time we hear of God's anger.

Yet Moses was God's prepared instrument, and the task God had set him he must do. But now it would not be entirely to *his* honour. for he must share the leadership with Aaron, who was coming out to meet him, Moses was told. And Aaron was to be a thorn in his side on more than one occasion. But Moses, who had failed first by his self-confidence, and now by his self-distrust, was henceforth to become ever more marked by simple trust and obedience to God. "Faithful in all my house" was to be His verdict.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

(to be continued, D.V.)

WITHOUT FAITH . . . DESTRUCTION

*"They utterly destroyed all that were
in the city" (Joshua vi.21)*

In contemplating the entry of the Children of Israel into the Land of Promise it is important that we should not overlook the character of the men of Jericho, since it has now become common, as indeed it was prophesied, that the reality of judgment would be questioned. These men are presented to us in Scripture as demonstrating the characteristic of those who finally perished — namely, *unbelief*. We read, "by faith the

harlot Rahab perished not with them that *believed not*" (Heb. xi.31). Rahab is a type of a sinner saved by grace, and as such we may look at her character in a subsequent study.

It is not necessary to discuss the fact that they were notorious sinners and that their disregard of all restraint had lasted for centuries. Four hundred and thirty years before the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, God had said to Abraham, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis xv.16); He had also warned His people before their entry into the Land, "defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these things the nations are defiled which I cast out before you" (Lev. xviii.24). *They perished because of their sins.*

Unbelief is, in one sense, the cause of eternal ruin to them that are lost, since we read, "he that believeth not is condemned already" (John iii.18). Trusting in Jesus Christ would deliver the sinner from his sins; doubting Him and refusing Him, he continues in them; and thus his sins, which might have been forgiven, remain with him, and he perishes because of his sins. No-one will be able to say that it was the fault of anyone but himself that he is eternally lost; that it was anything but his own sins which brought him to destruction. As judgment came upon the inhabitants of Jericho when they had filled up the measure of their iniquity; so it is because of sin, culminating in the persistent rejection of the Saviour, that the "wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col: iii.6).

In Spite of Long-suffering

Further, they that perish do so in spite of the long-suffering of God. The men of Jericho were given more than four hundred years to repent and forsake their sins, but none appear to have abused the gifts and long-suffering of God more persistently. Year after year the fertile land yielded abundant harvests. We are told that their cornfields, olive-yards and vineyards were fruitful beyond imagination. The grapes of Eschol were such that two men could hardly carry one cluster.

God still waits to be gracious to men today, "not willing

that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter iii.9). Men may say that they have had neither time, nor opportunity but it is a false excuse, and one day will be proved to be so. They have had plenty of time to cry for mercy, ample opportunity to believe in a Saviour and to accept the gift of salvation. In childhood, youth, prime of life, and even in declining years, the goodness and forbearance of God have been extended. Day after day has passed, each with hours full of the goodness of God; years have rolled by, each replete with blessing; time has been found for business, for home, for pleasure, for self — but none for God. Yet God was merciful, His long-suffering was salvation; but the sinner, blinded by his sins and unbelief, knew not that the "goodness of God leadeth to repentance"; because judgment did not come he argued that it would never come.

In Spite of Knowledge

The people of Jericho had seen among them the most faithful of the Lord's servants — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had dwelt in their midst. They had known of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, scarcely a day's journey away from them. The arm of the God of Judgment was stretched out, but they did not see or understand it. Lately, it had been reported to them that the descendants of these men who had lived among them were now marvellously grown into a nation which threatened the security of Egypt. Also, that through a series of remarkable events, culminating in their passage through the waters of the Red Sea, they had thrown off the yoke of their oppressors. Nor was this all; they saw His works. Within the sight of the walls of their city they had seen the same people cross the River Jordan, already swollen with the heavy rains of spring. Surely if they saw that happen they must have felt a solemn awe descending on them! What power was this? What secret was contained in that little object, covered with a blue cloth? Who was the God fighting for these people?

We know that thoughts of this kind passed through their minds, for the chronicler wrote "When all the kings

of the Amorites . . . heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan . . . that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them anymore, because of the Children of Israel" (Joshua v.1). But did all this lead them to repentance? No! The testimony of His servants, the news of His judgments, the sight of His power; all failed to touch hearts that centuries of long-suffering had failed to soften. They believed not with the faith of repentance and submission, but rather as "devils who believe and tremble" (James ii.19).

The men of Jericho had seen the power of God and heard the testimony of His servants time and again. Similar opportunities have been given in this twentieth century. Many have had Bibles, and read them. God has spoken again and again, sometimes through nature and sometimes through national and personal calamities. Conscience has spoken within and there has been the outward witness of the Lord's servants. All have confirmed the truths of Scripture; but like the ungodly and depraved world described in the first chapter of Romans, men "knew God", but "did not like to retain God in their knowledge". The knowledge they have had was enough to have saved them. Rahab knew no more than her fellow-citizens, but she used that knowledge, while they abused it.

In Spite of their own Efforts

The king of Jericho resolved to hold out to the last against the armies of Israel. He sought to slay the spies which Joshua had sent to "view the land", and when they could not be found, he pursued them in the direction they were supposed to have taken. There was a determination to resist which became more resolute as the hour for the destruction of the city drew near. The strictest watch was set, "Jericho was straitly shut up, none went out, and none came in". They trusted to their strong walls and gates, and their confidence was in their mighty men of valour. In other words, they trusted in their own works. So do others who have heard of Christ and finally perish in their sins. Every man who does not trust in Jesus puts his confidence in man, either in

another's ability or in his own; they all have the same result.

We cannot doubt that if the men of Jericho had abandoned their defences and had cast themselves upon the mercy of Joshua they would, like Rahab, have been saved. But they preferred their own way of salvation, and although it "seemed right" to them, the "end thereof was death". The strength of their defence deluded and blinded them. It is so in the realm of the spiritual. The abandonment of our own character, or feelings, as giving the slightest hope of salvation, and then unconditional surrender to Christ, is the only way of salvation. Those who refuse this way and rely on other means, must perish. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv.12). In so-called Christian countries, it is principally through reliance on good character and good works — though often covered with the name of Christ — that men perish.

Judgment

The seventh day arrived, and the city was compassed not once but seven times. The trumpets of rams' horns sounded, there was a great shout and, with a crash that shook the earth, "the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up . . . and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and women, young and old . . . with the edge of the sword". Their strong fortifications and their valour were powerless when God arose to judgment.

Why was there this utter destruction? Was it because they were sinners? In one sense yes. Yet since some were saved, it was not their sins alone that brought this terrible calamity. They might have been preserved, as was Rahab and her family. "By faith, the harlot Rahab perished not with them that *believed not*" (Heb. xi.31). The picture is complete. The character, conduct and final destruction of this ungodly and unbelieving people are a striking illustration of those who finally perish through unbelief.

Judgment may be delayed, but it is none-the-less certain. Men may deny the lessons of past history; they may, and do, deny the solemn announcement of things yet to come, saying,

“Where is the God of judgment?” (Mal. ii.17); “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Peter iii.4) and scoff at the declared return of the Lord Jesus “to execute judgment on all” (Jude 15). They may argue that punishment will not come. God’s warnings of judgment, however, are as true as His promises of mercy to those who turn to Him. The day of the Lord will come. Then it will be too late to seek salvation. “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found” (Isaiah 1v. 6).
T. D. SPICER

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

John xv.1-16

Most Christians who use the King James Version of the Bible are aware that the words ‘abide’, ‘remain’ and ‘continue’ in this portion are all translations of the same Greek word, the translators apparently having aimed at variety. Now the first of these words has dropped out of current use, except in one or two restricted senses, while the other two are often on our lips.

However, interpreters of the passage almost invariably concentrate on using ‘abide’, which is natural enough as this is the only one used in the first seven verses. But the effect of this, combined with the disuse of the word in other connections, is that the word has acquired an almost mystical meaning of its own, quite different from that of ‘remain’ or ‘continue’.

Let us therefore, in order to avoid this acquired meaning, use ‘remain’ or ‘continue’ instead of ‘abide’. When we do so, the words “**Remain in Me, and I in you**” seem to require a different emphasis from that we have been accustomed to give them. If we emphasize the word ‘remain’, it becomes just an exhortation to continue as a Christian — important indeed, but having no evident connection with fruit bearing. But shift the emphasis to the words “in Me”, and the difference is plain.

Take the eleven apostles themselves. The Lord had showed

them that He was to leave them, and that they were to be His representatives in the world, but were they to go out, in their own strength, to found a new religion, or to bring in the kingdom of God? No, indeed, all fruitfulness for God depended on their remaining **IN HIM**, on their staying close to Him, to draw all their strength and wisdom and guidance from Him.

The Lord used the figure of the vine and its branches to express this close dependence, in which there is a common life existing throughout. **“Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it remain in the vine; no more can ye, except ye remain in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that remaineth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing”**.

Take the writings of Paul. He often uses the expression “in Christ” or “in Him” to imply the full range of Christian blessing that belongs to the believer in Jesus, such as “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. v.17); “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”; and, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him**”. This verse approaches very closely to what the Lord is saying in His parable of the vine. For if “in Him” is the place that grace has given us who believe, “in Him” is also the key to every scrap of power for victorious living.

Nor is it on our side only: we must not overlook the Lord’s added words **“and I in you”**. If we seek His help, seek to obey His word, occupy our minds with His excellencies, we may be sure that He will fulfil His promise to the obedient disciple (chap. xiv.21) and manifest Himself to us, drawing out our hearts to Him by the remembrance of all that He has done for us.

It is at this point that the word ‘remain’ becomes important. For this conscious dependence upon the Lord Jesus must not be, cannot be, just when we wish it. It must be continual, daily, hourly. If we lose it, because of sin, we ought to seek

the Lord's pardon and restoration immediately.

The Lord said also, "If a man continues not in me, he is cast forth at a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned". There is no need to water down such words, for not to continue in Him is to abandon Him; continuance is always the hallmark of the true believer.

Finally let us look at the remarkable promise of verse 7: "If ye continue in me, and my words continue in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples". With minds completely directed by the words of the Lord, our prayers will be fully in accord with His will, and we shall be His disciples, His followers, indeed.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Testifying repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts xx.21).

Repentance from its etymology means a change of mind, as when Paul says he had at one time repented of making the Corinthians sorry with a letter; that is, he wished he had not sent it (2 Cor. vii.8). It is also used of God, probably "speaking after the maner of men", as when in Genesis vi. He is said to have repented that He made man. We may understand this to mean that God no longer found pleasure in man as He had when He created him. So also He repented of the overthrow He had threatened against Nineveh, that is, He saw no need to carry out His threat when *they* repented.

In Hebrews xii. we read that Esau, having despised the firstborn's birthright, was later denied the firstborn's blessing, and found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. Clearly it is not Esau's repentance that is spoken of here, but rather God's, in the sense that God's purpose, declared prophetically before the birth of the twins

(continued inside front cover)

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A Magazine for Believers

(continued from inside back cover)

instruction of the Lord Jesus to His disciples not to use titles of respect has been ignored in a whole series of "fathers", "reverends", "right reverends" and so on.

THE WILDERNESS

Having led the Israelites through the Red Sea, the trial of patience for Moses began, in leading that faithless, murmuring people through the wilderness. Every time some need arose, we find the same wearisome pattern: murmuring against Moses, often against God also, wishing they had never left Egypt, and sometimes talking of stoning Moses. His resource was always to cry to the Lord for help, and never did he cry in vain. Thus he learned to know his God, but the people never did. Their grumblings often remind us of our own, especially in their failure to remember past mercies. May we know how to take warning from their behaviour, while we take heart from the fact that the same patient and gracious God is ours.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGES

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed 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 on earth” (Eph. i.9,10).

Is there a purpose in life? The history of this world — where is it tending? Has the human race any future — is it progressing or is it destined to destroy itself? Questions such as these are common today, but no-one is able to give an assured answer. Some turn to astrology, some to various forms of spiritism to obtain an answer; and the prophecies from such sources make one wonder if the “strong delusion” of 2 Thess. ii.11 has already begun.

But when we turn to God’s word, the Scriptures, how different the answer! For while it assures us in many places that all the work of man shall come to nothing — the first man that is — it reveals God’s steadfast purpose to exalt the second man — the Lord Jesus Christ, and to bring in universal blessing through Him. This purpose is declared in the scripture quoted, which is worthy of detailed study.

The word “dispensation” is better rendered “administration”; while “gather together in one” is very variously translated. We are told that it is a literary word, which commonly has the meaning of “summarising” or “summing up”. In seeking to learn more of its meaning we shall find it helpful to consider other scriptures which bear on the subject.

We know that our Lord Jesus is now exalted to the Father’s right hand, but God makes known more of what this means at the end of this first chapter of Ephesians. We read of the exceeding greatness of God’s power “which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him 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, not only in this world (or age) but also in that which is to come.” And He adds “and hath put all things

under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body.”

This is the true extent of His exaltation; we know that not all the added words have yet been brought into effect. As Heb. ii.8 says, “We see not yet all things put under him.” We see that only few of earth’s inhabitants as yet acknowledge Him or believe in Him, but Phil. ii. assures us that every knee is going to bow to Him, and every tongue acknowledge that He is Lord.

It seems that there are great angelic powers — “principalities and powers in heavenly places” (Eph. iii.10) who already acknowledge Him; we learn from Eph. vi.12 that there are evil pincipalities and powers, and that in heavenly places, which have yet to be subdued. Satan and all his angels are to be cast out of heaven (Rev. xii.7-9), and will soon be bound and imprisoned so as to deceive the nations no more (Rev. xx.3) for a thousand years. Phil. ii. emphasizes that “every knee” which must bow to Christ includes beings heavenly, earthly and infernal. All those on earth who oppose Him must perish, and Scriptures employs very forceful figures to make this clear. Thus He will “rule the nations with a rod of iron”, He will “dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

The absolute supremacy of Christ is thus assured; but “summing up” all in Him is far more than enforcing His authority. We may note that in this summing up heavenly and earthly are included, but not the infernal world. We may therefore certainly conclude that when the Spirit of God tells us of summing up all things in Christ He means *blessing*, not just power and authority.

We who have been brought out of darkness into light by the Gospel of Christ know a little of what it means to have everything summed up in Christ. For we have learned that all our blessings depend on His work of atonement at Calvary, that the forgiveness of our sins is what we owe to His great love for us. We know that peace with God is ours through Him, and access to the Father we have in His name. Eternal life is ours in Him. Now in this verse (Eph. i.10) we learn that Christ is going to be the centre of blessing, not only for the Church (with whom He has a special relationship) but for a vast host beside.

BEFORE PENTECOST

Looking back to past ages, before and after the Deluge, there were undoubtedly some who, from knowledge of God retained, or from the witness of Creation, or through contact with Israel, learned to fear God and work righteousness, as Peter says (Acts xi.35).

In this we see the fruit of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in fallen men, awakening them to listen to the divine testimony. True, just before the Flood God warned that His Spirit would not always strive with man, but this scripture is proof that He did so strive. And Peter speaks of this as a work of Christ, who by the Spirit (i.e. in Noah, a preacher of righteousness) preached to those disobedient ones (whose spirits are now in prison), 1 Peter iii.19,20.

Then Israel, though so often disobedient and idolatrous, provided many witnesses to the power of faith, waiting for the coming of Christ. None of these of course, formed part of the Church.

PENTECOST AND AFTER

Then when the Saviour came, the glorious light dawned, and the full Gospel of His grace has since been published in every quarter of this poor world. The Holy Spirit still continues His work of grace with unbelieving men, as well as taking up His dwelling in each believer, so as to build them together to form God's habitation.

And what when the Church is taken up to be with her Lord, to be for ever with Him? Will the Holy Spirit, who is making the Church as a whole, as well as each individual believer, His temple, then be absent from the earth?

It is sometimes taught that this will be the case, but the truth is, that though His special presence as the Paraclete, come to fill the place of Christ will be withdrawn, His activity in the world will not.

In Rev. iv. John records a vision of the Lamb, as having "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." This speaks of the Holy Spirit in His fulness of power, as do the seven horns. One is

reminded of the prophet's word to King Asa, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect before him" (2 Chron. xvi.9).

We learn also from the Revelation that there will be witnesses to the name of Jesus at that time, a vast multitude of Gentiles whose trust will be in the blood of the Lamb, as well as a much smaller number (144,000) of the elect of Israel.

Besides these saved ones during that time of trouble, there can be little doubt that when the reign of Christ begins, when Satan is bound and the Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Joel ii.28), there will be a very great accession to the number of the redeemed — perhaps more than in all ages past. So also Israel's saved remnant will become a great nation once again — greater than at any time before — and what has never yet been seen, a wholly saved nation. Scripture is very clear that all her children will be taught of the Lord. Moreover Jesus, the King of Israel (and of the whole earth), will make plain to all that they are His chosen people, as Isaiah says, "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed" (chap. lxi.9).

ALL THINGS HEAVENLY

Let us consider now the closing words of Eph. i., already quoted: "He gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Colossians tells us that Christ is the Head of the Church, but here is a somewhat different expression — "head over all things to the church". Among all those who, in submitting to Christ, and finding their blessing in Him, become part of that vast summing up of all things in Him, the Church will have a special place. She is His body, in which all the members, joined to their Head and to one another by the one Holy Spirit who indwells them all, form "one new man" (Eph. ii.15), and, wonderful expression, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Now this word "fulness" is often, in this place, given by expositors the meaning of "complement", or filling out, with the explanation that Christ would be incomplete without the Church. But seeing that Colossians says "Ye are complete in him" this seems an unlikely meaning. Is it not rather that He has filled her with His fulness, so that all His fulness is displayed in her — will be displayed to all in the day of glory? And His headship over all things she will share. Here is the reason for saying "head over all things to the church." Again also in verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory". Surely all the praise will be His!

There are other heavenly saints besides the Church, of course. All those who have died in Christ — all who will partake of the first resurrection — will have a heavenly portion, since the Lord says of them that they will be equal to the angels (Luke xx.36).

Of the angels we have already spoken. In this great summing up they will have their place, but if we rightly understand Heb. ii.5, not a place of rule. But as those who have faithfully served their Lord in ministering to His people, the heirs of salvation, the angels will surely have their own rejoicing when the Lamb takes His place as the centre of all in heaven and earth — heaven and earth seen as united together, in that glorious day.

THE LOWER CREATION

Hitherto we have thought of responsible beings — men and angels. But in Romans viii we read of the deliverance of the creation itself from the bondage of corruption "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." So that we may surely conclude that the lower creation will have its part in that unity of joy and blessing, when the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and

wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

"WHAT A WORD IS THIS!"

In this way the congregation in the synagogue at Capernaum greeted the healing by the Lord Jesus of the man with an unclean spirit (Luke iv). Earlier it is recorded that the people were astonished at His doctrine for His word was with power. And now, having seen Him demonstrate His divine authority in dismissing the demon, they were amazed, and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." Thus the people at Capernaum paid tribute to the Lord's own word.

We in this day have not the privilege of listening to His teaching and bearing our witness to His gracious words. But as we ponder the glorious message of the Gospel, which has been preached to us in the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, we might well exclaim "What a word is this!" So let us consider seven aspects of the word which we are solemnly charged to preach (2 Tim. iv.1).

1. The Word of the Gospel

The Gospel is God's power for salvation to everyone that believes, whether Jew or Gentile. It unfolds the wonderful story of God's grace to needy sinners in the gift of His Son, and emphasizes that the propitiatory work of the Lord Jesus is the only basis of our salvation. Yet from the earliest days men have considered it too good to be true that we can be saved by grace alone, and have attempted to add something to the Gospel. In Acts xv we find that some were teaching "Except ye be

circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” This was an error that struck at the very foundations of Christianity, for to say that any rite or ordinance is necessary to salvation is to deny the all-sufficiency of Christ’s finished work. This matter was fully gone into and settled at the council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and Peter expressed the judgement of the assembled company when he said that it was God’s choice that through him the Gentiles should hear **the word of the Gospel**, and believe; and that God had given the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, making no difference, but purifying their hearts by faith. He concluded by saying, “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” God’s power for salvation then, rests in that all-sufficient work of Christ.

2. The Word of Truth

The equal blessing of Jew and Gentile through the Gospel is brought out in Ephesians. In chapter i.12 he is clearly referring to Jewish believers, linking himself with them, when he says, “that we should be to the praise of His glory who have trusted beforehand in Christ” (FWG). In verse 13 he extends the same blessing to the Gentiles when he says, “In whom ye also trusted, having heard **the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.**” Notice it is the word of truth we have heard, embracing perhaps the whole scope of God’s purpose for our blessing in Christ, and His redemptive work on which our salvation is founded. He goes on to show that the seal of this blessing is the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory (v.14). The believer is thus marked out for God, who is able to maintain in perfect security that which is His own until the day when all God’s purposes will be brought to fruition.

3. The Word of the Cross

“For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. i.18).

Human wisdom stumbled at the preaching of the Cross, and

human eloquence Paul refused to use, lest it should obscure the meaning of the Cross, and the solemn consequences of rejecting its message.

The tremendous importance of the word of the Cross lies in its display simultaneously of man's utter depravity and God's great love. If God's Son died on a cross between two evildoers as the only way of saving men from hell, what room is there for human pride or boasting? To the proud Jewish scribe the very idea of Christ dying was a stumbling block, and to the learned philosopher it was utter foolishness; but to those who believed it was God's saving power. No wonder that Paul made so much of the Cross! It is still the core of the Gospel, and any preaching which ignores it or gives it a minor place is not the Gospel of Christ.

4. The Word of Reconciliation

In his second letter to the Corinthians the apostle writes, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (chap. v. 19).

The apostles had received this ministry from the Lord Himself and were acting as His ambassadors, urging all men to be reconciled to God. How wonderful that with man so rebellious and manifesting such hatred towards God, it is God Himself who undertakes this great work of reconciliation! He has become the Seeker, beseeching men, alienated and hostile, to be reconciled.

The righteous basis on which God can thus act is next given. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Perfect and sinless in Himself, the Lord Jesus on the cross endured the judgment of God against sin. Now that He has been raised and seated at God's right hand, God sees every believer as in Him, free from all condemnation, and in this way we become the display of God's righteousness in Him.

5. The Word of Faith

The truths of the Gospel are presented to us that we might believe them. As the apostle says in Rom. x. 8, 9, "The word is

nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Notice here the vital importance of faith, for sinful man is shut up to faith as the sole means of finding acceptance with God. The law of God, as Paul shows in Galatians, only reveals a man's guilt, so that works of law cannot justify him, and only by faith can he be saved. Faith simply takes hold of the salvation which God presents to us in the Gospel of His grace. There is no merit in faith itself, but it is the acknowledgement of the sinner's hopelessness and a reliance on God's power to save.

6. The Word of Life

In Phil. ii. 15, 16 Paul reminds the saints that they were to manifest, on the one hand, the character that belonged to them and shine as lights in a dark world, and on the other hand to hold forth **the word of life**, which was their public testimony to the world. It is our privilege and responsibility as those who have received eternal life through faith, to hold out the word of life to others, pointing them to the One who alone can give life to those dead in trespasses and sins. It has been pointed out that "hold out" is the expression used of presenting a cup of wine to a person at a feast. And so it is as though the believer is holding out a cup of the water of life, offering it to all with the urgent invitation, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

7. The Word of Christ

In exhorting the Colossians Paul writes, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another; in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. iii. 16).

What is meant by "the word of Christ"? In the passage quoted the expression "the word" clearly has the meaning of "message", the spoken or written word telling us of Christ: the doctrine of Christ as revealed in the New Testament, the whole

truth concerning His person and work. We must allow all the wondrous truth concerning our Lord Jesus Christ to *dwell* in us, for occupation with Christ is the secret of a truly godly life. It has been said, "Here we have Christ for the new man. To know Christ and to live Christ you must have the mind of Christ, and for this you must have the word of Christ" (W.J.H.).

The word of Christ would include, I think, His teaching as we have it in the gospels. In John xiv.23 the Lord Jesus says, "If a man love me, *he will keep my word* : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." We quote from the A.V., except to read "word" instead of "words". It is the sum total of His teaching, the meaning of it. It is only as we have His word treasured in our hearts and governing our ways that we shall know this most intimate communion with the Father and the Son.

And as we have the word of Christ dwelling in our hearts, so shall we be fitted to help others, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, and so too will there be the outflow of praise and worship from us individually and collectively, as in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs we sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.

R. A. CREETH

MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, II

Submissive now to all that God was sending him to do, Moses returns from Mount Horeb, leading his flock back to Jethro his father in law in Midian. Then with his wife and sons he makes his way toward Egypt, assured by God that his life would no longer be in danger in Egypt.

But now an obstacle appears. Zipporah his wife had evidently refused to consent to the circumcising of her younger son, and Moses seems to have given way hitherto. But in doing so he was breaking God's covenant with His people. We can understand the supreme importance of this covenant when God was about to redeem His people from bondage and bring them to Himself: to keep His covenant was vital, above all in the family of His chosen leader. But not until God threatens

Moses with death does Zipporah give way, and she herself performs the rite, though still protesting.

Next, meeting his brother Aaron by God's appointment, they gather the elders of Israel together, and tell of all God's words, and perform the signs, so that the elders believe the wonderful news, and worship the God who had remembered them.

CONFRONTATION WITH PHARAOH

It is not the purpose of these articles to deal in detail with the plagues that were needed to break down Pharaoh's stubborn resistance to God's demand to let Israel go. It is Moses himself that we are concerned with.

Faced with the demand to allow God's people to go three days' journey into the wilderness to hold a feast to their God, Pharaoh insolently refuses, and instead adds greatly to the people's burdens and suffering. For all this, as might be expected, the people hold Moses and Aaron responsible. And Moses, who has not yet learned to know his God, complains to Him with bitter reproach: "Lord, why do you treat this people so badly? Why have you sent me? Since I spoke to Pharaoh in your name, he has done nothing but evil to the people, and you have done nothing to help them."

Well may we marvel at the patient grace of our God! To this outcry He makes no reply at all, save to explain further to His servant what He *will* do to deliver His people. He says, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: for now he will not only let them go, but will drive them out of his land." Is it not the same God who later became incarnate in Jesus, full of grace and patience? How wrong are they who fancy (and teach) that the Old Testament God is different!

God then went on to speak of His covenant name Jehovah and of His intention not only to deliver Israel but to make them His people and to be their God; to make Himself known as the God who had delivered them from the burdens of the Egyptians; and to bring them into the land which He had promised to their forefathers. All this Moses told the people, but they did not listen, being unable to take in such promises, so great were their sufferings.

Moses was baffled; he asked God how he could expect the Egyptian king to listen, when Israel did not. God sends him with Aaron back to Pharaoh, patiently explaining to Moses how He will use Pharaoh's obstinacy as a means of showing His great power to him and to all the Egyptians. For to those who had forgotten Him, and worshipped cattle and creeping things, God would show Himself as the true and living God.

From this point onwards, we hear no more unbelieving complaints from Moses. Rather we find him learning more and more to trust in God; learning that He was able to meet every difficulty; proving for himself that it was sufficient simply to obey God's commands. But not with blind obedience, for we see him entering into God's thoughts for His people. He knew that God would not be satisfied with a partial deliverance, and so we find him insisting to Pharaoh that the children must not be left behind, nor the flocks and herds.

Nevertheless to stand alone against Pharaoh and all his men was no mean feat of courage, and only faith in God could have enabled him to do it. And when he demanded the release of the flocks and herds, Pharaoh's anger flared up, and he threatened to kill Moses if he approached him again.

It is against this background that we should read the words of Heb. xi. 27, "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." To apply these words to his fleeing forty years before is to miss the point that *then* his eye was not on God, so he fled in fear (Ex. ii. 14). Hebrews makes it plain that his leaving (not "forsaking" — the word should be "leaving") Egypt *now* was a second act of faith, the first being of course his renouncing the glory of his position.

Moses then announced the last terrible plague of the firstborn, and added, "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move its tongue: that ye may know that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out." And the Scripture adds that Moses went out from Pharaoh in great anger. We are reminded of Moses' anger when he broke the tables of stone at Sinai — in

each case it was for the honour of God, for Pharaoh had repeatedly defied the will of God. In his own cause Moses was to prove himself "the meekest man in all the earth" (Num. xii.3), so that in both aspects he reminds us of the blessed Lord Jesus Himself.

THE PASSOVER

"By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Heb. xi.28).

It is remarkable that the faith here is ascribed to Moses, not to the people. But Hebrews speaks next of the people's faith in the crossing of the Red Sea. The difference is possibly that the threat of the waters returning was easily understood, and hence faith was needed to go on; but the threat of the destroying angel passing through the land could only be realised by faith in God's word. How many today ignore the judgment that that word warns of! However, Moses took God at His word, and the people obeyed his instructions.

Also Hebrews mentions specially the observance of the sprinkling of blood as done according to Moses' faith. Does this suggest some understanding of the spiritual meaning of the blood? One cannot be dogmatic, but we believe that Moses understood to a large degree. Was it not one more reminder of the Lamb that God Himself would provide?

Another thing comes into view with the mention of the Passover. We get here the first glimpse of Moses the lawgiver, receiving from God and passing on to the people a vast series of instructions. Whatever Jehovah commanded that Moses did, or instructed the people to do. His diligent obedience in this may seem a little thing, but God marked it specially in the words already quoted. Only one disobedience is recorded, during forty years. For comparison, we can think of the Israelites, after saying "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient", shortly afterwards worshipping the golden calf. Or perhaps of Christendom, where the simple

(continued inside front cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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glory, but not its eventual disappearance. The fading character of the glory of that covenant was thus hidden from them. The contrast with the unfading glory of the New Covenant is brought out in 2 Cor. iii. For though there was mercy in the Mosaic covenant, without which God could not have gone on with Israel, yet it was in essence only a ministry of death and condemnation, as must be whenever law is the basis of God's dealing with man.

THE TABERNACLE

Now that the covenant of mingled law and mercy was established, Moses' next task was to get the Tabernacle built — itself an exhibition of how God's mercy met the people in their sinful condition, while not giving any real clearance from guilt. It is well to notice also, that this provision for meeting the people's need for the time then present was all prepared by God before the golden calf was thought of, for the directions for the Tabernacle were given to Moses during his first forty days on the mountain.

At God's direction Moses invited gifts of materials from the people, which came flooding in in great abundance, showing that there was no lack of goodwill among the people. Two men selected by the Lord were given charge of the work — Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan, while Moses supplied the detailed instructions according to the pattern shown to him in the mount. This was a stupendous task for Moses, but he was led in this, as in all else, by the Spirit of God.

When ready, the Tabernacle was set up, again exactly as God had shown Moses, and its furniture put in place; the whole anointed with oil, and everything prepared according to the divine plan. The recurring phrase is most striking in this connection: "as the Lord commanded Moses." Then the cloud of the Lord's presence filled the Tabernacle.

(to be continued, D. V.)

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The need for a scriptural enquiry into a subject of such solemn import must be owned by all believers, especially in view of the prevalent confusion of teaching on the subject. Warnings are given by God for the day in which we live, when "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived", while the piety and devotedness of heart to the Lord of some who make claim to a special experience add to the desirability and urgency of the search. We must be thrown wholly upon Scripture in utter dependence upon the Spirit of Truth Himself to teach us. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God."

The nature of the enquiry requires that the following two things should be borne in mind — first that subjective experiences in themselves, however blessed and real they may seem, cannot decide the issue, and second that the possession of supernatural powers is no proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

As to the first, just as our assurance of salvation depends, not on our feelings or experiences, whether at or after conversion, but upon the unalterable word of God and faith in its testimony concerning Christ, so in this case it is to the Holy Scriptures that we must turn.

As to the second, it is a well known fact that healing powers are claimed by many who make no claim to be Christians (even the Roman emperor Vespasian) and also at Lourdes and by Christian Scientists. Satanic power will also, Scripture shows, be used to deceive "even the elect" in the last days.

What then has the Scripture to say about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? The preaching of John the Baptist pointed onward to it: "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. iii.11). Then our blessed Lord confirmed and renewed the promise after the Resurrection, saying, "John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i.5).

Next in the second chapter of the Acts is recorded the fulfilment of the Father's promise. There at Pentecost the Spirit was poured out on the believers gathered together — this is the promised baptism. The word is used also by Peter in telling the brethren at Jerusalem how the Spirit was given to Cornelius and his friends at Caesarea. He said, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost." The only other use of the expression in the New Testament is in 1 Cor. xii.13, where we read, "By one Spirit were we *all* baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks; whether bond or free". For the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost abides with the Church, as the Lord promised that He would (John xiv.16), so that every new believer partakes of that wonderful gift. The scripture already quoted makes clear that we all partake of that baptism, just as another scripture (Eph. i.13) speaks of being sealed with the Spirit as the common portion of believers. "After that ye believed" (A.V.) should be simply "having believed" — it is not a later experience.

It is important to hold firmly that the gift of the Spirit to fallen men is based upon the completed redemptive work of the Lord Jesus — not upon human merit or holiness. Thus even the Corinthians — with all the failures which Paul had to point out — were, each one of them — temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi.19), and Paul's exhortation to holy living is based upon this wonderful fact. Everywhere in the epistles it is assumed that the Christian is indwelt by the Spirit, and indeed in Romans Paul states that if any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. The expression "Spirit of Christ" is perhaps to bring out that the same blessed Spirit dwelt in Christ Himself as a man. It is thus that every believer is united to Him, the glorified Head in heaven.

Another blessed operation of the Spirit in the believer is to give him liberty to address God freely as Father. Quoting Romans again, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption (or sonship), whereby we cry, Abba Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii.15,16). Perhaps it was the lack of this liberty

that led Paul to enquire of the Jewish disciples that he met at Ephesus, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (R.S.V.). They confessed that they did not know that the Holy Spirit had come at all, and Paul, pursuing the enquiry, found that they knew nothing of the death and resurrection of Christ — nothing beyond the baptism of John. So, after learning the fuller truth they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus and received the Spirit when Paul laid his hands on them.

Moreover the Spirit is the power in us for the Christian life — power to overcome sin (Rom. viii.2-4), power for worship and for service, and it is in this connection that we are exhorted to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. v.18). That receiving Him and being filled are different is shown by the fact that several before Pentecost were filled with the Spirit — John the Baptist from his birth, Zacharias and Elizabeth perhaps temporarily (Luke i.15,41,67). But now that there is nothing temporary about the Christian's possession of the Spirit, is there any reason why we should not always be filled with Him? Being filled is the total yielding to the Spirit's guiding — yielding our bodies as a living sacrifice to God — allowing the Spirit to fill our hearts with Christ — and above all, doing what He bids us do. From the many examples in Acts and the exhortations in the Epistles we see that being filled is the condition for effective service, indeed it is just the normal Christian condition of those who desire to please the Lord. Most of us have to confess how often we fall short, yet we must protest at the way in which some would divide Christians into those filled and those unfilled. But when some believers speak of receiving the Spirit as a "second blessing" — a blessing enjoyed by some Christians only, they are probably unaware that the spiritual uplift they experience is the filling we have been considering. To ask the Spirit to come into our hearts when He has already made us His dwelling place is not really honouring to Him; but He may answer the desire rather than the words of such a request. But as has been said by another, He desires to give us, not just a second blessing, but a third and fourth, and without limit. None of this goes further than the apostle's prayer for those at Ephesus, "that ye might be filled to all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii.19).

MIRACULOUS GIFTS AND SIGNS

Miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are mentioned in 1 Cor. xii., and the so-called sign gifts — working of miracles, healing, and tongues are the subject of enquiry as to whether their continuance down to the present day is to be looked for. Then there are the outward signs mentioned in Mark xvi. which the Lord promised should follow them that believe. These assuredly did follow, as verse 20 records, and Acts ii.4; ix.33,34; xvi.18 and xxviii.3-6. Are they to be expected even to this day?

If we look at Matt. xxviii.18-20 we find a commission first to the Eleven but devolving upon believers “to the end of the age” to disciple all nations and teach them all things the Lord had commanded. And no signs are promised. However, the presence and power of the Lord are promised. On the other hand, though in Mark xvi. there is no mention of the end of the age, the command is to preach the Gospel to every creature. Could this be accomplished quickly?

Every dispensation has been ushered in with miracles, which are evidential in character, authenticating a spoken testimony. These ceased when (as in every case) departure from God’s written testimony had set in. Thus signs and wonders were wrought by Moses as the messenger from God, but when Israel had possessed the land and had not heeded his warnings, a Gentile king can carry them away into captivity without any display of power on their behalf. Most gladly and thankfully do we own that God is ever faithful to individuals who are faithful to Him, and none can limit His power. But should we expect God to own disobedience and failure with miraculous signs?

It is significant that the later New Testament writings warn of departure from the faith — so evident today in many parts of the professing church — but are silent with regard to miraculous powers. On the contrary, Trophimus is left sick at Ephesus (2 Tim. iv.20) and Epaphroditus is sick nigh unto death, while suffering is the expected portion of the saints — not miraculous deliverance. The only supernatural signs that we are given to expect are those of the deceiver in 2 Thess. ii.9

— a most solemn consideration.

To sum up, then, we should not look for miraculous powers in the church today, save perhaps where the Lord's servants were in the position of those at the beginning, breaking entirely new ground among the heathen. But no-one is entitled to deny the possibility of what the Lord might do in response to faith. And no scripture positively states that gifts of healing would cease. Only, James speaks of the prayer of faith saving the sick — something which is independent of dispensation, a resource always open to God's people. And let us never lose sight of the fact that God works among His people in more than one way, so that sickness is not to be taken as a sign of His disapproval, as some would argue. How often, indeed, has it proved an occasion of special blessing to the soul! How many of His choicest saints have been given, as Paul was with his thorn in the flesh, to prove His grace sufficient and His strength made perfect in weakness!

In regard to "tongues" the three occasions mentioned in Acts (Pentecost, Cornelius and his friends, and the Jews at Ephesus previously mentioned) were special occasions, quite different from the reception of the Spirit by individual believers. In no subsequent case do we read of an individual receiving the sign of tongues when he received the Spirit, and in no scripture is such a thing promised. In those three special cases, God was showing to all that He was doing a new thing.

The baptism of the Spirit, then, is not vitally connected with, or manifested by, tongues or miraculous signs. It is far more wonderful than any outward sign: it is God Himself coming to take up His dwelling in mortal man, a testimony to the perfection of our redemption and cleansing in Christ.

H. HARLE

TONGUES — A MISUNDERSTANDING

A misconception is regard to this much discussed matter of "tongues" is that tongues on the day of Pentecost were different from the gift of tongues referred to in 1 Corinthians. Indeed, some modern commentators have said that Luke was all mixed up about it! So we know where we stand!

Another aspect of the same misconception is that the tongues at Pentecost were for the purpose of preaching the Gospel to the "Parthians, Medes etc". That is, that the Parthians should hear someone preaching in their language, the Medes should hear another speaker in theirs, and so on.

Yet it is a fact that Peter stood up and addressed all of them — in what language is not said, but presumably Greek— a language very widely understood, and used as a common language everywhere.

What then were the Twelve and other disciples doing when the multitude heard them speak "every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" The word says that they were telling of the wonderful works of God.

We can be sure that these "works of God" were not just the wonders of creation, but especially the wonders of redemption through a crucified, risen and glorified Saviour. Yet there is a great difference between speaking to God (as they were doing) and speaking to men, even though the subject may be the same. We do not overlook the possibility that other of the apostles may have *also* preached the good news that day in the native tongues of their hearers, but we would emphasise that this was not what Luke in Acts ii.4-11 is speaking of.

The key is given in Paul's words in 1 Cor. xiv.21,22, "In the law it is written, With men of other lips and other tongues will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them that believe." That is to say, signs are not suited to believers, but to unbelievers, to wake them up. Believers on the other hand need building up.

So at Pentecost the tongues were to draw attention to the fact that God was at work — that His Holy Spirit had come to bear witness to Jesus, Israel's rejected Messiah, whom God had exalted to heaven. They were thus a sign to those crowds of Jews and proselytes from all parts of the world that the speakers were indwelt by a new power, of which the prophet Joel had spoken. Hence when Peter did stand up to preach, they were ready to hear a message from God.

When the Gospel was preached by Peter to Cornelius and his friends, the Holy Spirit came upon the hearers and they began to speak with tongues. It says, "For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." Magnifying God — that is what the believers were doing at Pentecost — not preaching to the crowds.

The Jews who came to Caesarea with Peter were believers, but very reluctant to see God's mercy extended to Gentiles. Hence they too needed a sign — a sign that this new departure was God's work. The tongues were then a sign that God had given the Holy Spirit to these Gentiles, whose hearts were cleansed by faith in the Saviour.

If tongues are primarily intended as a sign to unbelievers, this is a good reason why they were normally out of place in the church. And Paul goes on to say that he himself (though he could speak with tongues more than any of them) would rather speak five words that could be understood and so edify the church, than ten thousand words in a tongue. An exception might be made, he adds, if an interpreter were present to interpret to the church. But he insists that what the believer should covet was the ability to speak to the edification of those present. Nowhere are we exhorted to desire or to pray for the gift of tongues.

An interesting case is that of the Jews in Acts xix. who did not know that the Holy Spirit had come. When Paul spoke to them of Jesus, they believed and were baptised, and when he laid his hands on them they received the Spirit, and tongues and prophesying followed. There may not have been any unbelievers present, but God was marking the reality and importance of the new blessing which the Lord Jesus had brought to pass.

It is also evident from this comparison of the relevant scriptures that tongues were not incoherent utterances, but actual languages or dialects. The word "unknown" in the A.V. is an addition by the translators. The tongues were unknown to the speakers, but not to the Parthians, Medes etc. who heard them.

A NOTE ON BAPTISM, LAYING ON OF HANDS: AND RECEPTION OF THE SPIRIT

If we compare the cases in Acts where the Holy Spirit's coming on believers is recounted, we must be struck by certain differences.

At Pentecost there was neither laying of hands nor baptism, but the company of believers were all waiting for the Lord Jesus to fulfil His promise, and praying as He had directed them. But when Peter stood up to preach, he called on those who repented to be baptised and promised them the Holy Spirit (Acts ii.38). The believing Samaritans were baptised, but did not receive the Spirit till Peter and John had prayed and laid their hands on them (Acts viii.14-17). Cornelius and his friends received the Spirit without either baptism or laying on of hands, and were baptised afterwards (Acts x.44-48). The disciples in Acts xix. were baptised, and received the Spirit when Paul had laid his hands on them. Why these differences?

It is important to remember that Jewish believers already had a national place before God, but they had to learn that their nation had rejected the Christ. By being baptised they confessed this sin and separated themselves from the unbelieving nation (Acts ii.40). Then they came into a new place — where the exalted Christ was owned, and from Him they received the Spirit. The same was true of the Jewish disciples in Acts xix. 1-6.

Now the Gentile Cornelius and his friends had no place before God, no claims to blessing, no covenant. And Jewish believers tended to regard them as like the unclean animals in Peter's vision of the great sheet (Acts x.12-14). Thus on this occasion God asserted His sovereign right to show mercy and to bless, and bestowed His Spirit on them, seeing the faith in their hearts. No apostles' hands were laid on them, but baptism was then given to them as of *right*, Peter saying, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Now the Samaritans had no place before God, but they had assumed a place — a temple on Mt. Gerizim rivalling that at Jerusalem. Thus though they were baptised, before they were

allowed to receive the Spirit Peter and John from the church at Jerusalem needed to pray for them and to lay hands on them. Thus they were linked firmly with the church at Jerusalem, and the possibility of a separate Samaritan church avoided. We see the wisdom of God in all this.

When we consider these cases, it is evident that it is Cornelius and his friends that sets the pattern for today. No bishop's hands are needed to bestow the Spirit, nor can they, but only God in His sovereign grace. And baptism should follow faith.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, III

Sinai — Moses the Mediator

At Sinai Moses becomes not merely the leader of the people, but the Mediator between God and them. God puts before Moses His purpose to make them His peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, IF they will obey His voice and keep His covenant. Moses then calls for the elders of the people and lays before them all God's words. Their unanimous reply, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" Moses brings back to the Lord.

The consequence of their undertaking soon appears — if man takes a legal stand before God he puts himself at a distance, whereas grace always brings him near. So Moses is commanded to put fences round the mountain where God will descend, and on the third day the top of Sinai is covered with clouds and darkness and fire, and an earthquake shakes it continually. Moses is called up to the mountain top and sent back to warn the people to keep at a distance.

When they hear the divine voice reciting the Ten Commandments, they remove and stand far off in fear, while only Moses dares to go near and receive detailed "judgments" for the people to observe.

The Covenant

The inauguration of the Covenant follows. This is of course quite distinct from the Abrahamic covenant, which was of pure grace on God's part. Now we have a legal covenant between God and Israel, which depends for its continuance on

Israel's obedience. God could be relied on to do His part: could they be relied on to maintain obedience?

First Moses writes down all the commands which God had given him, and then, after burnt offerings and peace offerings have been offered, Moses as mediator sprinkles the blood on the altar, the book and all the people (their elders as representatives of course). The blood seems to have a double meaning here, as showing that death was the penalty of breaking the covenant, and at the same time hinting at the death of a substitute in the animals slain.

Then Moses, Aaron and his two sons, and seventy of the elders of Israel go up and worship God afar off. Their status as God's peculiar people is still unproved, so that they cannot draw near to Him. But Moses is called to go right up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, and the instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle. In this God's teaching about the way of approach to Him was to be set out in picture form. Forty days Moses was there, with the "devouring fire" on the top of the mount to remind Israel of the presence of their God. Alas, not even that visible sign which God gave as a concession to their weakness proved of any avail.

Moses the Intecessor

When some of the Israelites, tired of waiting for Moses to return, set up the golden calf and worshipped it, God warned Moses of what was happening down in the camp, in words that disowned them as His people, saying, "*Thy people, whom thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves . . . Now therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*"

Here was a test for Moses, if he had had the smallest degree of self interest! Is it not apparent that God was designedly testing him, and bringing out his real love for the people, and so for God Himself? So he asked God to spare the people, lest the Egyptians should crow, and asked also that He would remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yet when he came down towards the camp and saw the calf, and the idolatrous dancing in the camp of Israel, his own anger rose and he threw down the tablets of the commandments so

that they broke, and he burnt the calf to ashes.

It is worth noting that Scripture does not condemn the breaking of the tables. For it was really a symbolic act, in that God's law was already irretrievably broken by Israel, and their promise of obedience shown to be valueless.

And now Moses, who had pleaded with God to spare the people, takes stern action against the guilty ones who were thus defying God. The idolaters had made themselves conspicuous by their nakedness (such was the degrading nature of their idol worship), and Moses, standing in the gate, called out, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come to me". When the Levites answered the call, he sent them through the camp to kill all, whoever they were, who thus betrayed themselves. This response of the Levites received special blessing from Moses at the end (Deut. xxxiii.9), as indeed their action was fully in accord with instructions God had given to Israel — see Ex. xxii.20.

Next we see another demonstration of the remarkable balance of Moses' character, a balance which reminds us of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The same man who yesterday acted so sternly for the glory of God today seeks to offer himself to make an atonement for the people's sin. He says to the Lord, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Ex. xxxii.31,32).

But no such sacrifice could be accepted from a sinful man, however great his love for the people. But what a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Calvary! Yet now the Lord could only answer, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." And a plague followed, so completing the judgment which the Levites had executed.

Yet the people were far from realising the seriousness of what had taken place in their midst. The Lord told Moses that He would fulfil His word to bring the people into possession of the promised land, but would not remain in their midst, lest their stubbornness led Him to destroy them. He called on them not to wear their ornaments as a sign of mourning, and from this time onwards (according to a more correct translation of

Ex. xxxiii.6) they did not.

Moreover Moses felt that the camp was now a defiled place, and he set up the Tent of Meeting (not "the Tabernacle of the Congregation" as in the A.V., but a tent where God could be met or at any rate approached) well away from the camp, so that any who sought the Lord should go out there. But when Moses went out to it, the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the Tent to speak to Moses.

This signal mark of God's favour led Moses to intercede once again for Israel. To lead the people at any time was an onerous task, but how could he possibly do so if he was not supported by God's presence?

So he prayed that God would own the people as His, and go with them, "So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." So is the Christian separated in spirit from the world, because Christ is in him. We feel this as we go among men, but we need to testify to His name if our separation is to be fruitful for His glory.

To Moses God answered graciously, in words well adapted to bring strength and confidence in the midst of labour to every one of His servants, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Still Moses was not satisfied. It was God Himself he wanted to know. He had seen the manifestations of divine power in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and upon Sinai, but he felt there was more to the divine glory than all these. So he prayed to the Lord, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." This was a request that God could not satisfy in any full measure — till the Cross the glory of God could not be seen by man. Therefore God hid Moses in a cleft of the rock and covered him while He made His glory pass by; then he was allowed to see His back only.

THE SECOND FORTY DAYS

The covenant of the law as at first inaugurated had already broken down, but it was now to be renewed in a different form. There were the same ten commandments, for the requirements of God for man cannot be modified to suit man's weakness. Yet now, as a result of Moses' intercession, God would be

gracious towards the people.

Moses was told to go up to the top of Sinai with two fresh tablets of stone, and there the Lord came down in the cloud and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in mercy and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." We may note that though the words "Of them that hate me" are here omitted (compare Ex. xx.5) we may surely assume them to be meant — that is, the children suffer for the father's sin when they continue in it.

Moses, worshipping God as he listens to these solemn words, again entreated Him to go among the people and pardon their iniquity, and above all "take us for thine inheritance."

The words of the covenant follow: God would bring them into the promised land by His mighty power, and they must destroy every vestige of the idolatry they found there, and have no part with it. Also they must keep the appointed feasts. These words God told Moses to write down. Also the ten commandments were written again on the two new tablets, though it is not clear who was the "he" of Ex. xxxiv.28 — was it Moses or God? According to Ex. xxxiv.1 and Deut. x.1-4 it was God, which seems much more probable.

Altogether Moses spent another forty days in the mountain, neither eating nor drinking. What further communications did he receive during those days? They are not recorded, but when he came down from the mountain, with the two tablets in his hands, his face shone with a light that made Aaron and the elders of Israel afraid to come near him.

However he called them near, and then all the people, to whom he declared all the words of the covenant. When he had finished (not "till" as the A.V. says) he put a veil over his face until he went into the Tent to speak with God, and then he removed the veil. But when he came out of the Tent with new commands, his face was again shining, so he covered his face when he had finished speaking. In this way Israel saw the

(continued inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Magazine for Believers

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evil spirits can make their influence felt among men, but it may serve to warn any who are attracted by the novelty and excitement of the unknown not to meddle with the occult. And any Christian who is inclined to pooh-pooh the whole matter should read the life story of Doreen Irvine in "From Witchcraft to Christ" (Concordia Press) - where both the power of evil and the far greater and the glorious delivering power of the Lord Jesus Christ are told out.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

Some time ago, under this heading, the point was made that the wisdom of these sayings may easily be lost to us because of the uncertainty of meaning of some Hebrew words. In chapter xviii.8 and also chapter xxvi.22 we find this proverb:

The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. (KJV)

Here the word "wounds" is the difficulty. While the words of a talebearer may indeed be wounding, the association with swallowing in the second part of the verse seems incongruous. Modern translations seem to agree that the real meaning is savoury or delicious morsels. The "Living Bible" renders the proverb:

Gossip is a dainty morsel eaten with great relish.

This, besides being neatly put, makes the two parts of the saying adhere together. But what a stinging rebuke the words contain for those who enjoy conversation (not you or I, dear reader, we trust) which is based on the follies or shortcomings of others!

E.H.C.

OUR PRICELESS POSSESSIONS

In these inflationary times, how thankful every Christian should be that his choicest possessions have an eternal value! They are indeed treasure laid up in heaven, the corrupting influences of earth cannot tarnish them, neither can the believer be robbed of them. Let us now consider seven great possessions which should be prized by every believer in Christ.

1. A life which can never be forfeited.

In John x. the Lord Jesus speaking as the good Shepherd says, "My sheep hear my voice . . . and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." What perfect security is this! Notice that it is a blessing to be enjoyed now by every believer, for the Lord does not say "I will give", as if the giving of life was conditional upon the diligence of our following Him. He had previously declared that eternal life was bestowed upon hearing His word and believing the Father who had sent Him (John v.24). The present tense "I give" indicates that the believer actually possesses the imparted life. Nor can this life ever be taken from us, for the Lord says "they shall never perish, and no one shall pluck them out of my hand." The negative is very emphatic: it is as if the Lord said, "they shall never by any means perish." Then He went on to direct their thoughts to His Father who is greater than all, having complete control over all adverse powers. So He added, "and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." Thus the sheep are doubly secure: they are safe in the omnipotent hands of the Father and the Son. What an assurance of our eternal security — a life that can never be forfeited, for it depends not upon ourselves but upon the Father and the Son!

2. A relationship which cannot be broken.

Scripture uses two terms to express our new relationship with God: we are at the same time children and sons. We become children by new birth: we are born into the family of God, as John i.12 makes plain. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God, even to

them that believe on His name: which were born . . . of God." And in his epistle John writes, "See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God . . . Beloved, now are we the children of God" (I John iii. 1-2 JND). As God's children we are brought into the closest intimacy with Him as our Father, enjoying His love as members of His family.

Believers are also called sons of God, made so by adoption. This relationship sets forth the dignity and importance of our position as sons of God "marked out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ" (Eph, i.5, JND). It is interesting to notice that both relationships are brought together in Romans viii. 14-16. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For . . . ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." We are thus brought into relationship with God as His children and sons, and what immense assurance it gives us to realise that this relationship being of God can never be severed, though it is true we may lose the joy of it through carelessness of walk or worldliness.

3. An acceptance which cannot be questioned.

The apostle commences his epistle to the Ephesians by unfolding how God the Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, He has chosen us in Him, He has marked us out beforehand for adoption, and all this to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. How marvellous is the grace that can bring us into the very highest place — grace shown us in the Beloved, the One in whom is all God's delight! God has made us the objects of His divine favour in the Beloved One, and all this is "to the praise of the glory of His grace." We are thus brought into a place of favour and blessing according to all that is in the heart of God. If this is God's purpose for us, who can question the reality of our acceptance even now?

4. A righteousness that nothing can tarnish.

What a wonderful verse is 1 Cor. i.30! "But of him (i.e. of

God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Christ then is the believer's righteousness: God sees us now in the risen Christ, the One who died in our stead upon the cross. Full redemption having been accomplished, the ever just God becomes the justifier of him who believes in Jesus (Rom. iii.26). As the robes of skin which death furnished to cover the nakedness of our first parents in Eden, so are we clothed in Christ.

Possessing such a righteousness the believer can say with Isaiah, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Is. lxi.10). This is a righteousness that can never lose its beauty or its perfect character.

5. A peace that can never be disturbed.

On the eve of His departure to the Father, the Lord Jesus left a wonderful legacy to His disciples, in saying to them, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv.27). He was going on to the cross, and there He would make peace by His blood. This peace becomes the possession of all who are justified by faith (Rom. v.1). It was confirmed to His disciples when, risen from among the dead, He appeared in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you" (John xx.19). There in His wounded hands and side was the evidence of His atoning sufferings, the basis of the peace He had established at the cross.

But the Lord assured His disciples of something more: He said not only "Peace I leave with you," but "My peace I give unto you." This is surely the personal peace He enjoyed as man here in this world — an inward peace that was peculiarly His as He walked through this world, the peace of perfect confidence in the Father, of unbroken communion with Him and of entire submission to His will. This peace He now gave as a personal bequest to His own, and it would be according to His fulness, a means of linking them with Himself, for they would share that peace with Himself the Giver. The world gives and loses what it gives: the Lord gives of His own fulness

in a "love that gives not as the world, but shares all it possesses with its loved co-heirs."

Graciously the Lord adds, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." It is a peace for us to enjoy today in the face of the difficulties and trials of the present time. It is an inward peace that cannot be disturbed by pressures without.

6. A title which can never be disputed.

Let us turn to Rev. v. where a door has been opened in heaven (chap. iv.1) and John has a vision of the glory of the Lamb. Under the figure of the twenty-four elders the glorified saints are seen celebrating the worth and atoning work of the great Redeemer, as they sing a new song, "Thou art worthy . . . because Thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. v.8-10. JND). Out of this universal distribution of the human race, God gathers and redeems a people for Himself. The basis of this redemption is not mere power as with Israel of old, but it is by the blood of the Lamb. We are indeed redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. i.18). At what infinite cost has this heavenly and eternal blessing been secured! We sometimes sing, "Our title to glory we read in Thy blood." Surely none can challenge this title to heavenly bliss which the Lord Himself has secured for us at such a cost.

7. An inheritance which will never fade.

This brings us to Peter's first epistle. He begins by ascribing praise to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." How sweet and precious is this — a living hope and an unfading inheritance! Peter was writing particularly to those converted out of Judaism, and we know that the hope of the Jew centred in the Messiah. He had died, and therefore the hopes of the Jew were gone, as the two on the way to Emmaus confessed: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel". What Peter speaks of is in contrast with Judaism — a living hope, an

incorruptible inheritance, both undefiled and unfading. The inheritance into which God brought His earthly people, the land of Canaan, they soon corrupted, their own sins defiled it, and it faded away before their eyes as they were led captive out of it. Is it not an encouragement to us, living as we do in a world where everything fades away, and is corrupted and defiled, to be assured that we have an inheritance which is incorruptible, which nothing can defile, and which endures eternally? This is our hope, and meanwhile we are kept by the power of God through the energy of faith, which enables us to rejoice in the prospect of its certain accomplishment, even though for the time being we may be passing through sorrow and trial.

R. A. CREETH

MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, IV

Surely no man ever had such a stupendous task as Moses had in leading the host of Israel through the wilderness! Their continual complaints and murmurings seem to have been brought direct to Moses, and the burden of it at times depressed his spirit in spite of his dependence upon God. Thus when they complained about the manna, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?" and demanded that Moses should give them meat, the unreasonableness of it brought Moses to the point of despair. He said to God, "Why have you laid the burden of all this people upon me? Are they all my children? I am not able to bear it alone. Where can I get meat for them all?"

Moses "I" and "me" show what his mistake was — he had for the moment forgotten that he was only the servant, and that it was God's business to supply the people's needs, and to deal with their complaints. But, answering his request for others to share his burden, God told him to bring out to the Tabernacle seventy of the elders of Israel, and then the Lord came down to them in the cloud, and the Spirit that was upon Moses rested on them also, and they "prophesied". So, if they shared his burden, they also shared some of his honour, but it

is not apparent that he was really helped by this.

A singular thing is recorded at this point, that two of the elders remained in the camp, yet also received the Spirit, and prophesied there. This was too much for Joshua, who evidently felt that they were taking more honour than was due from Moses, and he asked him to forbid them. Moses' answer brings out his truly humble spirit: "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"

As to the people's demand for meat, God answered that they should eat meat for a whole month, till they came to loathe it. How easily does man forget that all creation is God's, and Moses in this case was no better than the rest of us! Should all the flocks and herds be killed to supply the people with meat, or all the fish of the sea be gathered together? he asks. If we marvel at the humility of Moses, we ought truly to be astonished at the longsuffering of God, "slow to anger, and of great kindness". To Moses' unbelieving challenge He merely replied, "Now you shall see whether My word shall come to pass or not." And that night the wind brought an enormous flock of migrating quails, apparently so weary that they settled or flew so low round the camp that the people were able to gather immense quantities which they laid out round the camp to dry. The least quantity gathered was ten homers — about 500 gallons. But a dreadful plague which followed punished the people's rebellious unbelief.

JEALOUSY OF MOSES

It was inevitable that, sooner or later, Moses' leadership should be brought into question, but one would not have expected this from his own sister and brother. But their jealousy of Moses' pre-eminence causes Miriam and Aaron to utter this challenge: "Has the Lord spoken only by Moses? Has he not also spoken by us?" We are not told whom they spoke to, but far more important, that "the Lord heard it." If only we could remember that He hears what we say about each other!

It often happens that the spirit of criticism picks on some minor and irrelevant matter to complain of when the real

complaint cannot be aired sufficiently, and so it seems it was here. Knowing that it was God who had chosen Moses, they spoke against him because of his Ethiopian wife. It is not clear whether this was Zipporah or a second wife, nor is it certain what they objected to, but it seems evident that it was a frivolous complaint, intended only to lower Moses in people's eyes.

The Scripture itself points out here the remarkable meekness of Moses — meeker than any man alive. We do not read that he took up either matter, but, again like the blessed Lord Himself, left it to God to vindicate him.

Having called the three to come out to the Tabernacle, God appeared to them in the pillar of cloud and spoke directly to Miriam and Aaron, and made clear the immense superiority of Moses to any rivals. To prophets, such as they claimed to be, the Lord would speak in a vision or dream, He said, but to Moses He would speak face to face, and the form of the Lord he would see, for Moses was faithful in all God's house.

Having thus settled the chief matter, the Lord swept aside their frivolous complaint, demanding instead why they had not been afraid to speak against "My servant Moses." Twice the Lord uses this phrase, showing what He thought of their presumption. For God claims to judge His servants Himself, and Moses He had judged worthy of the highest honour. Certainly their offence was the more heinous because of Moses' standing, but let us not lose the lesson for ourselves — to beware of speaking against any of God's servants, even the humblest. See James iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 1; Rom. xiv. 4.

Miriam, evidently the responsible leader in all this, was stricken with leprosy; and then we see again the Christlike character of Moses. He did not need Aaron's pleading for their sister, but immediately interceded with God on her behalf. It is evident that the Lord responded to a request so near to His own heart, though we are not actually told so, but He insisted that Miriam should be shut out of the camp for a week as one unclean. And the people did not go forward till she was received in again, so that the whole camp knew of the sin, and God's judgement upon it. How perfect are His ways! Next we come to

THE MISSION OF THE SPIES

When Moses at the Lord's command sent twelve spies to spy out the land, the report that they brought back emphasized the strength of the cities and of the giant-like sons of Anak, so that the people were afraid to go in. Did we not know our own hearts, we should be unable to understand how they could so easily forget how the power of Egypt had been broken. They murmured against Moses and Aaron, and even spoke of choosing a captain to lead them back into Egypt, in spite of the efforts of Caleb and Joshua (two of the spies) to instil some of their own faith into them. See Numbers xiii.

Here was a complete rejection of God and of all His purposes for Israel, and He said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." But as before on Mount Sinai, Moses entreated God to pardon them, and also spoke of how the enemies of Israel would triumph and say that their God was unable to bring them into the land. So Israel were once again delivered, but Moses was commanded to tell the people that all the men over twenty should die in the wilderness for their unbelief, except Caleb and Joshua. For those whose report had caused the people to murmur, the ten spies, there was immediate judgement in that they died of the plague. So began that forty years' long sojourn in the desert, till all the men of war had died, a trial which Moses as well as the others had to endure.

He reminded the people of this sojourn at the end, urging them to consider God's ways with them, His gracious provision for them, in that their feet did not swell, nor their clothes wear out. He reminded them of the manna, which they had despised, and of how God brought water out of the rock for their thirst. And he urged them to recall all this when they were settled in the land. What unremitting love for God and His people, and zeal for the glory of God, did this faithful servant display throughout his career!

DEMON POSSESSION AND RELATED TOPICS

Everyone must be aware of the great increase of popular interest in the subject of the occult, in all its manifestations, and as Scripture also has a good deal to say on the subject, the Christian ought to know what attitude to take towards these things.

While many of the so-called spirit manifestations have been repeatedly proved to be fraudulent, as for example by the well known Houdini in his day, it is quite certain that this does not cover all the facts. Also, the view that the belief in evil spirits among heathen tribes is to be explained as superstitious ignorance is certainly a mistaken one. The light of the Gospel has indeed delivered men and women among these tribes from their fears, but this is not to say that the fears were groundless.

The gospel records contain many instances of how the Lord Jesus delivered people from demons by the power of His word, and of the disciples doing the same, but these records have been treated by sceptics as showing ignorance of psychological phenomena. The case of the man who gave his name as "Legion, because we are many" may serve to show how fallacious this view is. For if there were really no spirits in the case, why should the healing of a man suffering from a psychological disease disturb a herd of swine quietly feeding? The same animals had been quite unaffected by the poor man's frenzies.

Perhaps the term "demon possession" is a trifle misleading, or should at least be confined to the more extreme cases, cases in which the whole personality is submerged by the spirits. Thus there may be other cases in which evil spirits dwell in a man, but cannot be said to possess him, except perhaps at intervals.

In this connection it is well to remember a scripture such as Eph. ii.1,2 "You who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

We may thus distinguish three stages of demonic activity — working in men so as to lead them into evil and blind their eyes

to the truth (2 Cor. iv.4); dwelling in them so as to poison their personality; entirely possessing and governing them. The last is the rare case which many of us never meet, but which seems far less rare than it once was, especially in these lands where Christianity is being given up.

The casting out of demons in the name of Jesus is one of the signs promised to believers in Mark xvi., and today, now that the reality of demon possession is becoming accepted, we hear of some gifted to do this. Where there is simple reliance on the power of His name, plus in many cases prayer and fasting (Mk. ix.29), one can only rejoice at such examples of deliverance. Some attempts at exorcism however seem to have little relation to what we find in the scripture records.

NECROMANCY

The modern revival of interest in the possibility of communication with the dead is a symptom of the decline in respect for the Bible, for nothing is more definitely forbidden in it than this necromancy (Deut. xviii 10,11). The account of Saul's visit to a woman having "a familiar spirit" (1 Sam.xxviii) brings out first how he himself had put to death all who practised this (verse 9), but had apparently missed the woman at Endor. She is commonly called a witch, but not in the Bible, for witchcraft is somewhat different; she was what is now called a "medium", and the spirit her "control".

A study of this incident makes clear that, whatever spirit she had dealings with, she was *not* able to bring up Samuel, as Saul asked. Her startled cry (verse 12) when Samuel appeared proves how unexpected he was, but God interfered to give his own message to the guilty king, instead of the tactful or ambiguous message which Saul would probably have received otherwise.

Hence this chapter brings out the very opposite to what a casual reading indicates, i.e. it gives no support to all to the idea that the spirits of the dead can be brought back, or can be communicated with. It is the Lord Jesus alone who holds the key of hades and of death (Rev. i.18).

In view of so much that is fraudulent, it is not certain in many cases whether mediums do have contact with spirits at

all; but what is certain is that the messages they claim to give are of such a trivial character that they obviously do not come from the eternal world.

We may conclude this section with the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'And when they say unto you, "Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter"', should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?' (RSV).

WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT

The very word "witch" conjured up, until recently, the thought of an outworn and laughable superstition, but this picture is rapidly changing. It is well known that there are large numbers of witches and witch "covens" in this country alone, but what is not generally known is what their objects and their practices are.

A witch by definition is a person (not necessarily a woman) possessing or claiming to possess supernatural powers acquired by commerce with spirits. Of course claims are made that these activities are harmless or even beneficial to society, but the fact that these are carried on in lonely places, under cover of darkness, is enough to refute this. The Lord Jesus said, "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil". No doubt some witches are worse than others; there are so-called white and so-called black witches, but the Bible emphatically condemns them one and all. Moses was commanded to tell Israel "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. xxii. 18), and witchcraft was punishable with death in this country until recently. Unfortunately many women who were merely old and perhaps disagreeable have been accused of witchcraft by superstitious persons and many have been put to death, until the courts refused any longer to act in these cases. The writer is not advocating a revival of such trials, but would emphasize that the public at large has no idea of the dreadful evil and wickedness which today are practised at meetings of witches. Sexual orgies of the worst kind, desecration of churches and graves, sacrifices to Satan — this is the kind of activity — furiously denied of course — which is practised, together with frequent contact with evil spirits, who enable

miraculous "signs" to be performed, just as Scripture foretells of the Antichrist.

What should the Christian do in these circumstances? The word of God gives no authority for investigating these things, and we should avoid them like the plague. Indeed, any curiosity about the occult is dangerous, because the real existence and activity of evil spirits is often not suspected. Such spirits cannot attack a person unless given an opening, but prying into the occult may give just such an opening. Satan's fiercest attack is always against the Christian, because he hates the name of Jesus, but he is quite powerless against those who keep close to the Lord in dependence upon the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

CHARMS, MASCOTS, PISKIES etc.

Many or perhaps all of these things are in their origin idolatrous, in that they depend for their efficacy (if any) upon spirits. To depend upon them in any measure to give success in an undertaking, or to avert danger, is dependence upon powers which are evil. Christians above all should avoid things which are so dishonouring to our heavenly Father, who is worthy of all our trust whatever the circumstances, and is always ready to help those that call upon Him.

ASTROLOGY

The belief that the stars in some way influence our destiny is as old as the human race, in spite of its quite irrational basis. But the revival of interest in the subject of late years accords with the giving up of faith in the living God. Men put their trust in the inanimate universe, just as they believe that this universe created and fashioned itself. But sooner or later men must have to do with God, and perhaps the worst feature of this fashion is the distraction that it affords. Isaiah prophesying of the fall of Babylon — the very mother of astrology — says "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things

that shall come upon thee." So those who follow the same road will find that God's word — the despised Bible, will prove true, with its warnings of judgement to come. Now is the time to repent and turn to the Saviour.

FALSE PROPHETS

The Lord Jesus warned that many false prophets would arise, and would deceive many. Even in the apostles' days John could say "Many false prophets are gone out into the world." Today we see a continual production of false religious sects in which the simple gospel of God's love, and redemption through the Cross, are set aside. Paul's warning to the Galatians, "If any man preach any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed," is still valid.

But in addition to these new sects, the call to unite all religions together (not just all Christian denominations, note) is certainly due to false prophets. They deny the truth enunciated long ago by Peter before the Sanhedrin, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." No need to say here what that name is! How can Moslems, who do not believe Jesus to be God's Son, or that He died for sinners; or Jews, who hold Jesus to have been a deceiver, unite with Christians?

These false prophets are led by spirits of evil, and John tells us how to discern them. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God" (1 John iv. 23. JND).

Note the words "Confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh", that is, the acknowledgement of that glorious person, the Son of God who came in flesh. He could have come in other ways, but He chose to come in flesh, to become incarnate — the very truth which is now once again being denied. An ordinary man does not "come in flesh" — he is born flesh, and had no previous being. But the Son of God chose that way in order that He might meet man's need as a sinner and die for him. Thus is He the only Way, *the* Truth — there is no other, and the Life.

This short summary by no means exhausts the cases where

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from the Scripture of Truth

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A Magazine for Believers

EDITOR'S NOTICE TO READERS

Most readers of WORDS OF HELP will know that the Publishers also publish SCRIPTURE TRUTH, a magazine of similar character. Owing to rapidly increasing costs it has become necessary to incorporate the two magazines into one, beginning D.V. January 1978. It will use the title SCRIPTURE TRUTH, and its editor will be Mr. J. S. Blackburn. It will appear bi-monthly.

To help the Depot, will all purchasers of WORDS OF HELP please write WITHOUT DELAY, making their wishes clear about the number of SCRIPTURE TRUTH they wish to order from January 1978. The price will be 15p per copy.

The editor of WORDS OF HELP would like to thank those who have supported the magazine over the years, and hopes that they will now derive help and encouragement from SCRIPTURE TRUTH.

(continued from inside back cover)

thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Thus, we may say did Moses leave his work with the Lord.

The law which God sent him to teach remained always the basis of God's dealing with Israel (see Malachi iv.4), till under the New Covenant of grace God will write His law in the very hearts and minds of a restored Israel, when at last they turn and believe in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

SAVED BY FAITH

*"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not" (Heb.xi.31)
 "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive" (Josh.vi.25)*

The story of the conquest of Jericho contains more than lessons and instruction in righteousness for the children of God, it possesses solemn warnings for the enemies of Christ. In addition to these, it also includes an example of the salvation of sinners "by faith". "Rahab the harlot" is one of those who, like the "woman that was a sinner", Zaccheus the publican, the thief on the cross, and Saul the Pharisee, "obtained mercy" that they might be patterns "to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim.i.16). It is the old story which is forever new, and while the day of grace lasts can never be told or heard too often.

Our last study, under the title "Without Faith . . . Destruction", was a picture of the judgement of God falling on those who persisted in sin and unbelief; but among those inhabitants of Jericho one family "perished not". What was the secret of their preservation? A little scarlet cord, hanging from one of their windows. A thing unseen by their neighbours, and if seen doubtless thought nothing of, was their means of salvation. It was the token between Rahab and Joshua, the leader of the armies of Israel, that assured her perfect safety and that of her family. While the king of Jericho and the people of the city trusted in their strong walls and relied on the mighty men of valour to protect them from the invaders, a woman of the streets took refuge behind a scarlet thread. They perished and she did not.

Rahab was a Sinner

There was no doubt that Rahab was a sinner. Her life was one of immorality. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of her as "the harlot Rahab". She belonged to that class which the world generally looks down on, occasionally pities but always regards, in spite of present day so-called "enlightened thinking", as several steps removed from ordinary folk. Yet she was saved. Why is it that her particular calling is so

conspicuously dwelt on by the Spirit of God? Would it not have been kinder to have omitted reference to her special sin? Briefly, no. He who came to "seek and to save that which was lost" would show that some of the objects of His mission were those without any redeeming features in them, those who were out and out sinners, utterly and completely lost in the depths of degradation. As in other places, He has taken here one of whom none could say there was any reason why she should be saved.

Salvation is only for *lost* sinners. Job, the perfect man, had to acknowledge that all his boasted perfections were but uncleanness in the sight of a holy God. Nicodemus, a ruler of the people, must give up his life of religious duties, they cannot help him to "see", let alone to "enter" the Kingdom of God. Saul of Tarsus had to count all his position and achievements as "loss" and be brought down to the dust. So we, too, are to discover that every imagined merit, whether of thought, word or deed, is valueless as a contribution towards our salvation. "This man receiveth sinners" (Luke xv.2). This is God's way, He receives none else. It is only lost, ungodly people that He does save. As much as the natural pride and self-righteousness of the human heart may rebel against it, all who would be saved must come on the same ground. Sinfulness, and sinfulness alone, renders anyone a proper subject for salvation. Of this glorious truth "Rahab the harlot" is an example.

Rahab was Lost

"I know that the Lord hath given you the land," said Rahab to the spies, and in that statement she identified herself with her neighbours and gave herself up for lost. In doing so, however, she threw herself on the mercy of the instruments of God's wrath, and not in vain. While others were doing "the best they could" to ward off impending judgement she was ready to acknowledge her inability to meet it and trusting in the appointed means of salvation.

This is still the only way. To admit our complete failure to meet the demands of God's righteous law, to confess our exceeding sinfulness, and in our helplessness to rely solely upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, is the only way of

salvation. But it is a sure way. What does the publican's prayer tell us? Conscious of nothing but that he is a sinful man, so conscious of it that he dares not to lift up his eyes to heaven, he cries to God as though there were no other sinners in the world but himself. The Saviour's comment regarding him is "I tell you this man went down to his house *justified*" (Luke xviii. 14). It is only the lost, the guilty and the self-condemned that need, seek, and find a Saviour. But such do find Him, or rather He finds them; for He came to "seek and to save that which was lost", and He "goeth after that which is lost, until He find it" (Luke xv. 4). Rahab gave up herself for lost and she was saved.

Rahab Believed God

Another feature about this woman is that she heard about and believed in God. So did her fellow-townfolk it is true, but they were disconsolate at the tidings of impending judgement. They stifled their convictions, they barred their gates, they trusted their walls, they resisted God and perished. Rahab was different. She had no greater opportunity than the others, she heard the same news, she too trembled at the thought of judgement; her house was upon the wall of the city, but she had no confidence in it. Rahab found deliverance by throwing herself on the mercy of the captain of the hosts of Israel. She did not stifle her convictions and when two men came from Joshua to "view the land, even Jericho" she received them; and when others sought to bring them out and slay them, she hid them. In Rahab's behaviour we see the action of one who, conscious of guilt and realising that judgement must come, admits the claim of God and welcomes the message. Once the truth of God's claim is admitted, that truth begins to work; it cannot be inactive. It is the "Word of God which effectually worketh in (them) that believe" (1 Thess. ii. 13).

Rahab Had Assurance

Rahab's convictions were insufficient for salvation, she must have the fullest certainty. "Swear unto me by the Lord," she said "and give me a true token". Absolute assurance, and nothing else, was her criterion. Her safety must depend upon and be connected with the almighty God of these people.

Nothing less than this would suffice her. A conscience that is truly aroused to its need of salvation can never be satisfied with anything but complete assurance. Some may argue that this is unattainable, even that it is presumptuous. Such have never trembled under the fear of the "wrath to come"; they have never known the despair of uncertainty. The man who is content without full assurance of salvation has never seen his own deep need, or realised the anger of a righteous God against sin. The soul that is conscious of its guilt and entire helplessness, not only seeks salvation but cannot rest until it *knows* that it is saved. Like Rahab, it must have a "true token", it must have the security of the Name of God that it shall never perish.

It was a true token; but Rahab's safety depended not on her *seeing* it, but on her trusting in it. In fact she could not see it; it was outside, not inside her house. She had to hang it out and depend upon it, not look at it. It was the sight of it by others that ensured her salvation. It is by *trusting* Jesus, not by the perception of the senses, that the sinner is saved. So we are shut up to faith. The scarlet line is on the outside. Jesus stands between us and judgement. We trust Him and we are saved.

Rahab Knew She was Saved

How did this poor woman know she was saved? By the promise that was given her; she received the "Witness of men". She believed what they said, and if their word could be depended upon, she knew that she was saved. It rested on that alone. Her own character and conduct gave her no hope, her own feelings could be no proof that salvation was hers. The only security was the promise in the Name of the Lord. This is sufficient. Those who trust in Jesus know that they are saved for they have the security of Jehovah's Name. He has sworn that they shall never perish. He cannot deny Himself. The witness of God is greater than the witness of men (1 John v.9). The salvation of every soul that trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ is bound up with the very name and character of the eternal God. This is the ground of assurance.

The day came when the seventh and last blast on the trumpets sounded and the mighty walls of Jericho crumbled in

the dust. Yet, the crashing walls, the shout of Israel and the hosts of armed men rushing into the defenceless city, brought no terror to one family. The "household of faith" could quietly wait for that moment when they would be taken from that scene of carnage and destruction into the camp of Israel, there to dwell in peace. The secret of their peace, *by faith*.

Rahab was saved by faith, and you can be saved in no other way. God tells us emphatically, "by faith the harlot Rahab perished not." Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved.

T. D. SPICER

"TO US-WARD WHO BELIEVE"

The expression "to us-ward" is found three times in our Authorised Version. In present day language we would simply say "toward us", but perhaps there is more pointed significance in this old fashioned expression, in that the Spirit of God is emphasising that there is something especially for us — where "us" of course means the whole household of faith. Let us then look at these three scriptures.

1. God's thoughts are to us-ward.

In Psalm xl. we are told, "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (verse 5).

In this passage we are first reminded of God's works already done. We think of His creatorial power and glory in bringing the universe into existence: "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps.xix.1). We can think of His wonderful work in delivering His people from the bondage of Egypt, and in sustaining them in their long pilgrimage through the desert, and bringing them at last into possession of the promised land.

But the psalmist speaks not only of God's wonderful works, but of His manifold thoughts i.e. His plans to us-ward. It is

David also who says, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee" (Ps. cxxxix.17,18). In the light of God's omniscience and His omnipresence David marvels that he should be the subject of God's innumerable and precious thoughts.

In a letter to the captive Israelites in Babylon Jeremiah passes on a message from Jehovah to His people. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer. xxix.11) What an encouragement to these exiles to be assured that God was thinking of them with thoughts of peace, and would bring them back again to their own land! He would indeed give them "a future and a hope", as the literal rendering is. The "future" would tell them that their history as a people was not yet over: the "hope" that there was a better time in store for them. God would ever encourage His people with the prospect of blessing to be brought to them when Messiah came to reign.

Let us now turn to the New Testament to consider God's thoughts for the blessing of His people today. In the first of his two prayers for the Ephesians (chap. i.17-23) the apostle makes three great petitions. He prays that they might know, firstly the hope of God's calling; secondly the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and thirdly the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe.

The hope of His calling would refer to his earlier statement that "God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (verses 3,4). This is the hope of His calling, His divine purpose for the saints, His thoughts to us-ward, eternal and heavenly blessing in Christ.

Then there is the inheritance: he wished them to know the riches of the glory of it. This inheritance is outlined in verse 10: "according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things

upon the earth" (JND). Wonderful thought, that Christ is to be the centre of universal blessedness and glory, all things in heaven and earth being put in subjection under Him, and we (His glorified saints) are to share that place of supremacy with Him, for we have obtained an inheritance in Him.

When the Lord takes possession of His inheritance, and the whole universe is put under His government, He will do it, not by Israel as was the case with Canaan, but through His heavenly saints, the Church of God. Such are God's thoughts to us-ward who believe.

Thirdly, there is the power that is going to put us into possession of this glorious inheritance. This we now come to.

2. God's power to us-ward who believe.

The apostle speaks of "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Our risen and glorified Lord has taken His seat far above all angelic hosts, and He is there as a man. We may say He has carried humanity above all heavenly powers. Thus He has given us present association with the throne of God in Him who sits there. Even when we were dead in sins, He quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. ii.5,6).

How marvellous it is, that the power that redeemed us to God, that has delivered us from the power of Satan, that has indeed lifted us out of the place of degradation in which we were by nature and has associated us with the risen Christ on high, is the self-same power that raised Christ from the dead! To lay hold of this great truth should give us true moral and spiritual courage. As one esteemed writer has put it, "Is there anything difficult after this? If we knew we had at our command the power which called the world into being, should we not laugh at impossibilities? But we have an energy greater than that which was put forth in creation — no less than that which raised up Christ from the dead. The word of God positively tells us so. Why then are we so weak? Because we so feebly believe it" (WK.). We know it as a statement of

doctrine, but it is in the midst of trial and difficulty and when facing the enmity of the world that we forget what it is the apostle prays for us — that we should know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe.

3. God's longsuffering to us-ward.

We have been considering the precious and marvellous thoughts of God for our heavenly and eternal blessing, and the greatness of the power that puts us in association with the risen Lord at God's right hand. All this is true and real now to faith, but we await the Lord's coming to bring us into the presence of His glory. Peter reminds us that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii.9).

While the Lord's coming is indeed a very blessed hope for the believer, for we shall be caught up together with those who now sleep in Christ to meet the Lord in the air, and so to be for ever in His glorious presence, the unbelieving will be left to meet Him in judgement when He returns in glory. His longsuffering in the face of men's unbelief is so that there may be yet further opportunity for repentance, for He is not willing that any should perish. Salvation and eternal blessing is His desire for men, and we may rejoice that many in other lands, if few in this, are finding salvation through the one and only Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

R. A. CREETH

MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, V

KORAH'S REBELLION

Most of the troubles which Moses experienced in his dealings with Israel arose from their lack of trust in God and in His power, but now comes a rebellion directed against Moses himself, and Aaron (Num.xvi).

Korah — a prominent Levite, together with Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Reuben, had been gathering a following

among some of Israel's chief men, objecting to the leadership of Moses and Aaron. "Ye take too much upon you, seeing that all the Lord's people are holy," they said. Moses discerned a special feature in the case of Korah, in that he claimed to partake in the priesthood, which God had restricted to the family of Aaron.

How did Moses deal with this? His first reaction was to fall on his face before God, no doubt to enquire what he should do.

Then he told Korah and his company to take censers, with fire and incense to offer before God, so that *He* might show, in His own way, whom He accepted as His priests. How consistent was Moses in so doing! For if the Lord had chosen him as leader and Aaron as priest, it was well to let the Lord indicate His own choice.

The sequel is well known. The rebels gathered all the congregation against Moses and Aaron, and only by Moses pleading for them all were they saved from complete destruction by the Lord. But, warned of what God was about to do, Moses called upon all the people to separate themselves from the rebels. "If these men die the common death of all men", Moses said, "then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord does something unknown before, and the earth swallow them up alive, know that these men have provoked the Lord." Then as Korah, and Dathan and Abiram and their families, stood defiantly before their tents, the earth opened under their feet, and closed over them.

Yet even so the rebellious spirit among the people did not subside, for the next day they accused Moses and Aaron of "killing the people of the Lord." How hard was this for Moses to bear, knowing that it was only his intercession had saved them! And yet again, as the Lord sent a plague among the murmurers, Moses sent Aaron with incense to make propitiation for them and stay the plague.

Finally the Lord directed Moses to make the tribal leaders bring their rods, with their names on them, to be kept overnight in the Tabernacle, so that God might show, by the blossoms on his rod, which of them He had chosen to draw near Him as priest.

In the morning only Aaron's rod was found to have, not only

blossoms, but fruit also — a proof indeed that none could gainsay that God had made His will plain.

MOSES STRIKES THE ROCK

It was again the oft repeated pattern: Israel felt a need — there was no water for them to drink — and at once the people gathered accusingly against their God-appointed leaders. “Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord”, they said, referring to Korah’s rebellion. “Why have *you* brought the congregation of the Lord into the wilderness, to die there? In this evil place there are none of the figs or vines or pomegranates you promised us.” (Num.xx.)

The only resource of the leaders was to seek the Lord’s face at the Tabernacle door, as they had done in similar circumstances before, but it does seem that they were unprepared for the Lord’s gracious response to the people’s need. “Take the rod” He said, “and gather the assembly together, and speak to the rock before their eyes, and it shall give out its water, and thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.”

No word of rebuke in all this! No hint of a plague because of their unbelief! However, Moses seems to have thought that a rebuke was called for, and he said to the people, “Hear now, ye rebels, must we bring forth water for you from the rock?” And lifting up his rod he struck the rock twice, and the water gushed out in abundance. But the Lord said, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people, ye shall not bring them into the land I have given them.”

What exactly was the sin here? Firstly, disobedience, for he was told to speak to the rock not strike it. Secondly, he had misrepresented God. The Lord knew the people’s great need, and would show His compassion, graciously overlooking their murmuring; but Moses presented a false picture of God to them. And this was, as God said, because he had not believed Him. He could not take in the extent of God’s goodness and longsuffering. How often have the Lord’s servants acted in severity, when He would have had them act in grace! Christian teaching, too, has often misrepresented God in this way.

Poor Moses! he was but flesh and blood, and had often borne with the people with remarkable patience, and now he had failed, and must forfeit the hope he had looked forward to for so long. If the sentence seems a severe one, perhaps in God's righteous government it was necessary because Moses had so often exhorted the people to obedience. And his very eminence as the man to whom the Lord had spoken face to face aggravated his fault. But it is good to see that he was one of the two chosen to appear with the Lord in glory upon the mount of Transfiguration, for in the heavenly scene grace reigns supreme.

DEUTERONOMY

As the Israelites moved towards the end of their wilderness journey, they encountered a variety of opposing forces which tested Moses' inspired leadership. The characteristics of that leadership which we have already noted — Moses' entire obedience to God, his confidence in Him, and his love for the people of God, these were displayed repeatedly; but as it is Moses himself we are studying, we need not comment further on the incidents.

After the destruction of the power of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og on the east of Jordan (ii.26-iii.8), Moses brought Israel into the plains of Moab, and there rehearsed all the ways of God with them since they came out of Egypt.

The book of Deuteronomy records his words, and an intensely interesting record it is, as Moses' own voice is heard pleading with the people he loved.

He set clearly before them their uniqueness as a people chosen by the Lord because He loved them and would keep His promise to their forefathers, and not in any way because of their own qualities. He reminded them of how they had heard the voice of God speaking to them from mount Sinai. "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? . . . Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon earth beneath, there is none else" (iv.33,39).

The people indeed asked that they should not again hear the

divine voice speaking from the fire, and in response to this Moses was led to promise that a prophet like himself should rise from their midst to speak God's words to them — a clear promise of Christ (xviii.17-19; and see John vii.40, Acts vii.37).

Moses pointed out the excellence of the laws which God had given them, so that the nations would hear of them and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people," (iv.6). And so he rehearsed all the statutes he had already given them, and exhorted them to obedience, and warned them against imitating the practices of the nations in Canaan, and their idolatry.

He sought to strengthen the people so that they should not fear these nations "greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven . . . the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them" (ix.1,3). He did not want them to turn back as their fathers had done.

A theme to which Moses returned again and again was that God would establish them in the land and bestow every blessing upon them if only they remained obedient to His law and faithful to His name; otherwise they would surely perish. The covenant which God had made with Israel at Sinai was now renewed, with a detailed warning of the consequences of breaking it (chap. xxix), and God showed Moses that the time would indeed come when Israel would lapse into disobedience and turn away from God into idolatry — idolatry which they would learn from nations which they failed to dispossess, and from their neighbours. We know how exactly all this came to pass.

God did more than warn Moses, He inspired him to compose a song in which the relations of God to His people were set out in a remarkable way, from the time when He first divided the nations, making a place for Israel, whom He found "in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness", and "led him about, and instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye" to the time when — as the song showed would surely come to pass — "they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger." The song goes on to speak of the dreadful sufferings which this

behaviour brought upon Israel, until at last, when brought down to the very depths by their enemies, God will in mercy deliver them, turn His hand against their enemies, and finally call upon the nations to rejoice with them as His people. Moses was to teach the song to the people, so that it might be a witness to them throughout their history. Their sufferings, alas, we know are not yet complete, but as this remarkable prophetic song has up till now been fulfilled to the letter, so assuredly will it be right on to the end (chap. xxxii).

MOSES BLESSES THE TRIBES BEFORE HIS DEATH

That same day God announced to Moses that he was to die, and bade him go up into mount Nebo and view the land. But before he went up he gathered the tribes together to receive his blessing. The blessings of the individual tribes we cannot quote, but the ending contains those wonderful words: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms . . . happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!" These are then Moses' last words.

Then Moses went up mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and there God showed him the whole of the land of promise. There he died, and was buried, as Jude tells us, by Michael the archangel, in a valley in the land of Moab — his grave forever unknown, lest those who had disobeyed him in his life should worship him in his death! He was 120 years old, yet full of health and vigour, a prophet without parallel in Israel, whom the Lord knew face to face.

Apart from the Pentateuch, there is one other writing attributed to Moses, and that is the 90th. Psalm. The grandeur of its language entirely suits him, and some of the closing verses, in the light of the prophesied failure of Israel, give the key to their eventual establishment in blessing: "Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and

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