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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

A Happy New Year to all Our Readers at Home and Abroad

WHAT would make 1958 the grandest year of all for Christians? Undoubtedly—the coming of the Lord Jesus to receive them unto Himself! And He has said “Surely I come quickly”: to which loyal and loving hearts readily respond “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

It is good to find that the truth as to the Lord's coming again still arouses keen interest amongst Christian people generally. The Editor was privileged to be present at two addresses given recently at Catford, London, by Mr. John Weston, well known to so many of our readers, on the subjects “Russia's Crushing Defeat Foretold” and “Scriptural Reasons for the Second Coming of Christ.” The Hall was crowded to capacity, with an overflow meeting in the rear room during the evening. As the appropriate scriptures were reviewed, all were made to feel how very near the coming of the Lord must be. None of those present will forget the memorable challenge to fill the intervening days with devoted service to the Lord, and to look forward with great joy to the day of His appearing, not merely because of the blessings which His coming will bring to the whole earth, but because in that day our blessed Saviour Himself will be “glorified in His saints” and “admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess. i. 10).

We hope it may be possible for us to give our readers notes of the addresses referred to.

Have I a hope, however dear,
Which would defer Thy coming Lord,
Which would detain my spirit here,
Where naught can lasting joy afford?
From it, my Saviour, set me free
To look and long and wait for Thee.

(G. W. Frazer)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XIII: "They made Him a Supper"

(Read: John xi. 1-57 and xii. 1-11)

BETHANY . . . there they made Him a supper" (John xii. 2).

At a great age, and in a distant land, John wrote his beautiful record of the Son of God. He had known Him very intimately, for, though all His own were beloved of Him, yet John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He leaned on His breast at supper—he must have felt the very heart-beats of the Divine Person on earth.

Looking at these latter events as he records them, it seems that John had never lost the sense of dramatic contrasts surrounding the Man who loved him.

The chief priests and leaders of the Jews have murder in their hearts; they even speak their thoughts of killing Lazarus also, for was he not the living witness of a power in Jesus which they did not themselves possess? Then there is the strident voice of Judas, whose evil impulse is aligned with that of the ruling ecclesiastics demanding the reason for this prodigal waste of value poured unstintingly upon the person of Jesus. Looking back over the years, and in harmony with the guiding Spirit of God, John sees the conflicting forces at work as though it were but yesterday, and the eye of his memory delights in the central picture of the Lord Jesus as a woman pours out all her store of the precious anointing for Him alone.

It is six days before His last passover with His disciples that "they made Him a supper" in the Bethany home. The fig tree of Israel is withered, with the leaves of its pretence, but at Bethany ("House of Figs") there is fruit of comfort for the lonely Man of sorrows Who has no home. "There they made Him a supper"—it is as though with a sense of relief John calls back the memory of it, for, at the close of chapter xi. he has had to record "The Jews passover was nigh at hand . . . both the chief priests and Pharisees had given a command-

ment, that if any man knew where He were, he should shew it, that they might take Him." Enemies without, and even a betrayer within, yet Martha and Mary and Lazarus are His friends, and each has a personal place in the heart for Him. It is good to think of Jesus there among His friends, for Caiaphas, the chief of the Jews, has proposed His death, and it is thus that Jesus is found at Bethany with the remnant—the believing few in whose company He finds rest.

They are all so attached to Him. Yet each has not the same degree of faith. It is FAITH that appreciates Him, and this appreciation is the vital force in a believer's life. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the *knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*" (Phil. iii. 8); "that I may *know Him*, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Ch. iii. 10).

The faith of Martha reached no further than to the prospect of the Kingdom. Jesus was precious to her as Messiah, and she is active in her service to Him as displaying that spirit of willing worship that will, at the appointed time, characterize Israel. But the scripture does not say that Martha alone made Him a supper: there is a collective desire to do Him honour—to show Him affection, and, though no spoken word of Lazarus is recorded, yet he sits at table with the Son of God—alive from the dead.

The name Lazarus means "without help." He had seen the approaching shadow of death, and had been helpless as death claimed him. In the tomb he had heard his name, and a Power not his own brought him forth. Still "without help" himself, they loose the grave clothes from him, and he looks into the face of the One of whom it was written "I have laid help upon One that is mighty" (Psa. lxxxix. 19). There was no need for a word from Lazarus; he was the living embodiment of the promise of Israel's resurrection.

Jesus is with His friends. He has also about Him, at supper with Him, people precious to Him as foreshadowing the outcome of the sacrifice to which He was committed. Typically, they were part of "the joy that was set before Him" (Heb. xii. 2).

The love of Jesus for His friends at Bethany was not affected by the degree of their faith. When Lazarus was dying and Jesus did not come, Martha's faith was not equal to the test—"If Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." It is so easy to measure His love by human standards. She could not discern the love that delayed in order that the death condition, justly attributable to Lazarus, and, in type, to Israel, might be answered by resurrection.

At Bethany "they made Him a supper"—but, in reality, Jesus was the Founder of that feast. It was His "banqueting house" (Song of Songs ii. 4), and His banner over them was love—His love, that conquered death.

Faith that endures under test is very precious. It is admired by man, but it is precious according to the standards of God Himself since it derives from an appreciation of His Son. The faith of Mary reached to Jesus Himself—all that He was in rejection and sorrow—all that He would be in death and the aftermath. She did not stop at His kingdom glory, great as that will be. She sought to apprehend His personal worth—though beyond human calculation—and all the glory that must follow as the outcome of His death. To her, His death-gift was beyond price, and she gave Him all that she possessed. The selfishness of unbelief is more horrible by contrast, but how immediate and overwhelming is the response of her Lord as He vindicates her action and announces the significance and value of her gift.

It has been said that here is the seed of the assembly hidden in the soil of Israel and of this world, but to come forth in resurrection in the beauty of eternal life. It is very beautiful to see this. It is even more beautiful to take up the privilege of the church in that character of worship which is the outcome of appreciation of Christ.

Mary said no word, for true worship is in the heart of the humble. "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Mark vii. 6) was a sad pronouncement upon a privileged people. But her unspoken worship was in close communion with Jesus in His rejection. She entered into the bitterness of His approaching death. As in the case of

many others in the scriptural record, her name was significant of this. It was derived from the Hebrew—Mara (bitter). Naomi, at the gates of Bethlehem, cried “Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.” There is an antidote to the bitterness of the waters of Marah (Ex. xv. 25)—it is a tree, cut down, but it is Jehovah that shows Moses that Tree. The significance of the death of Christ is revealed by the Spirit of God. So Mary, alone aware of the bitterness of His rejection and death, is also made aware of the power and efficacy of it, and, as she pours upon His holy person the stored fragrance of many days, there is a joy set before her beyond the present sorrow, for she knows that He is the “Resurrection and the Life.” Like Naomi, she enters a Bethlehem “in the *beginning* of barley harvest” (Ruth i. 22).

Today the believer is still aware of formalism and lip service. There is ritual and hypocrisy as well as open unbelief and enmity against God. There is also a place of fruitfulness for Christ—a Bethany where precious stores of personal appreciation of Him may be devoted to His honour. These are of “great price,” and the house will be filled with the odour of the outpoured ointment—a “spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God” (1 Peter ii. 5).

EDWARD T. WOOD.

FIVE SMOOTH STONES

(Read: 1 Samuel xvii. 40)

UNDoubtedly the outstanding lesson to be learned from David’s magnificent defeat of Goliath is that success lies within the reach of anyone who will stand firm against the powers of evil, trusting in the living God to give him the victory. Without the slightest trace of any confidence in himself which David might have been tempted to feel after his previous triumphs over the lion and the bear, he openly confessed as he strode forward to meet the giant’s challenge that his whole trust was in the name of the Lord of hosts, the

God of the armies of Israel, whom Goliath had defied. In that Name he would fight, and in that Name he would conquer.

So pre-eminent indeed does his confidence in God appear to have been, that it is a little surprising to find any reference to the practical preparations David made for the encounter, especially after his decision to discard Saul's armour. He had rejected the weapons of the ungodly because he had not proved them, thus demonstrating his reliance upon God Himself to be his Shield and Defender.

Nor was that faith disappointed. Victory, complete and overwhelming, was vouchsafed by God to the courageous youth who had so readily stepped forward to defend the honour of His name, depending unreservedly upon God for the strength to do so.

Nevertheless, unexpected as it may be, mention is made in the divine record of the very careful preparation which David did in fact make to achieve the destruction of Goliath. Believing assuredly that the use of "means" was in no way inconsistent with the exercise of faith, he not only planned to take his sling, but went down to the brook to choose suitable stones to use with it. Is it unreasonable to suppose that whilst David used his own experience and judgment in the selection of these stones, he lifted his heart in prayer to God for divine guidance? Aware indeed that, with God on his side, he might well require only one of them, he nevertheless chose five, a tribute to the diligence, thoroughness and humility of mind with which he approached the stern duty that lay ahead.

Doubtless there were in the brook stones of many shapes and sizes. And since David's reliance was not upon the arm of flesh but upon the power of God, did it really matter which particular stone he used? Would not the most awkwardly shaped missile find its mark if God's power were there to direct it to the vulnerable chink in the giant's armour?

Apparently David did not think so. He did not take the view that one stone would be as good as another, but applied himself to the careful selection of suitable stones, picking this one and rejecting that one, with deliberation. We believe that in this

preparatory work he exercised the same faith as appeared later in his demeanour and challenge to Goliath on the battlefield itself. Though confident that the outcome of his venture of faith would depend upon an arm stronger than his own, he did not overlook the necessity for preparing himself as carefully as he knew how for the task before him. Having done that he could calmly leave the issue to God.

It is suggested that this incident contains a very important lesson for those who would do battle for the Lord today. No doubt the principle involved can be applied in different ways, but we have in mind to consider it here in relation to the work of the gospel and ministry to the people of God.

All too often we hear of persons who take the line that reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit dispenses with all need of preparation before speaking: some indeed appear to have the notion, sincerely held no doubt, that preparation of any kind will inevitably quench the Spirit, thus identifying the leading of the Spirit of God with spontaneity. The Scripture to which they draw attention is Mark xiii. 11 where we read: "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." The corresponding verses in Matthew x. 19-20, and Luke xxi. 14-15 should also be read.

It cannot surely be questioned, however, that these words were spoken, not with reference to the normal exercise of gift in the Lord's service, but in order to give an assurance of divine enabling to those who were going to find themselves summoned hastily before antagonistic authorities in the world to answer for their faith, having little or no opportunity to order their defence. What sort of match would poor and unlearned disciples be for the world's trained and cultured lawyers by whom they might expect to be indicted before rulers hopelessly prejudiced against them anyhow? What hope had the disciples of the Lord in such a situation of being able to speak a true word for their Master?

The Lord foresaw all such difficulties, however, and relieved

the fears of His disciples by assuring them they would have at their disposal the power and wisdom of the Holy Ghost by which, despite any inferiority of education or speech, they would be able to confound their accusers. So that far from being panic-stricken and tongue-tied when brought before the overpowering rulers of the world, they would have the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to open their mouths in irresistible testimony for their Lord. How wonderfully this promise was fulfilled in the case of Peter and John (Acts iii. and iv.), Stephen (Acts vii.) and Paul (Acts xxiv.-xxvi.)!

Can the Lord's words quoted above be used to excuse and cover up lack of diligence on the part of servants of the Lord today who have ample time to consider what they intend to say when the opportunity occurs for them to exercise their gift? We do not believe they can. Such an interpretation would be inconsistent with the apostolic injunction to Timothy (1 Tim. iv. 13-15): "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." "Have an outline of sound words" (2 Tim. i. 13 N.T.): "It has seemed good to me . . . to write to thee with method" (Luke i. 3 N.T.).

With five stones in his scrip, which, though all smooth, may yet have been assorted as regards shape, size and weight, David would still need to rely upon God when the time came to pick out the most suitable one to hurl. Possibly the distance between himself and the giant, which could not be gauged accurately beforehand, would determine whether a light or heavy, a small or large, stone would be required. But with an ample store of ammunition, painstakingly acquired in advance, from which to choose the right stone, David could count upon God to direct his aim unerringly when the crucial moment arrived. There are other examples in the Scriptures of the Lord's servants making careful preparations, Elijah and his altar on Mount Carmel, for instance (1 Kings xviii. 30-35).

We do not overlook, of course, that occasions may arise when a servant of the Lord will be called upon at the very shortest notice to fill a vacancy, or to witness for the Master

with little or no opportunity to prepare a message in advance. In such circumstances the exceptional help of the Holy Spirit may surely be counted upon. How many can testify to the special grace and help of the Holy Spirit of which they have been made very conscious in an unforeseen emergency!

But we believe the general principle of preparation for what the Lord gives His servants to do is unaffected by the foregoing. We know of no Scripture that would countenance lack of diligence and forethought on the part of those who preach or teach the word of God. All who aspire to such service have, surely, a great responsibility to do whatever lies within their power to ensure that what they minister to their fellow-men to guide their souls to safety, or the food they offer to the lambs and sheep of the Lord's flock, is the word convenient and in season, and that the truth they seek to convey is expressed in such "plainness of speech" (2 Cor. iii. 12) that every hearer, young or old, will be edified and comforted.

E. A. PETTMAN.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

II. The Power for Walk, Witness, Worship

(Notes of an address to young Christians, given at Wildfell Hall, Catford, on the 19th July, 1957)

Reading: Romans viii. 1-16

IN His last recorded utterance before His ascension the Lord said to His apostles "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts i. 8). That was the promise of a power without which they could hope to achieve nothing, and for which they would have to wait. Once given, however, they would find Him their sole source of strength for walk, witness and worship.

The Power for Walk

The Scripture read shows clearly that Christians can walk either after the Spirit or after the flesh. The flesh is that evil principle within each of us from birth, which prompts us to

do things displeasing to God. How can we stop it from operating in our daily life? Only by walking in the Spirit.

That the believer should walk in the Spirit is of the utmost importance if we hope to succeed in Christian witness. The vital thing for us, vital too for God and for His church, is the kind of people we *are*. Is it very easy to use and quote Scripture, but God is concerned with what kind of persons we are inside. Without uprightness of heart and behaviour we can neither worship God nor witness for Christ effectively, so that the power of the Spirit for Christian walk must have our first consideration.

In the heart of every Christian, however young, God Himself has implanted a deep yearning to walk in His ways; to follow Him who said "Follow Me." How can you fulfil this yearning? Not by turning over a new leaf; nor by good resolutions or the making of vows; you will succeed only by walking in the Spirit.

The means which the gracious Spirit of God uses to enable us to do this is firstly the continual reading of the Scriptures. The Bible is unique amongst the books of the world in this, that though you may have read the same words many times before, when you read them again God then lays their message upon your heart. As you obey that message, so you will walk in the Spirit.

Then there is, of course, prayer. The believer is not heard for his "much speaking." But daily prayer exercises the mind as to things which will please the Lord.

Finally, Christian fellowship: how wonderful to know that we belong to God and to one another as members of His family! to find that our reading of Scripture and praying may be supplemented by the help and counsel to be received from, and offered to, one another!

Yet with all these things to help us, we must not forget that the temptation to walk after the flesh is ever with us. Every moment we need to be watchful, for it is in unguarded moments that we find ourselves doing what *we* want to do, and displeasing God, instead of walking in the Spirit. The battle within us is continuous, but by the power of the Holy Ghost we can win the victory.

The Power for Witness

It would be difficult to find a better illustration of the power of the Holy Spirit for Christian testimony than that of the apostle Peter. In Acts iv. he was being taken to task by the Council of the Jews for preaching in the Name of Jesus. We read he was "filled" with the Holy Ghost (verse 8), and addressed the Council in such uncompromising terms that "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (verse 13).

Again in the same chapter, after being let go by the Council, they united with their fellow-believers for prayer "Now Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word" (verse 29). They needed boldness, and they asked God for it. You know the result: "When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (verse 31).

Now Peter was the apostle who on the night of the Lord's betrayal had been so unhappy when the Lord Jesus declared they would all leave Him, that he said "Lord, though all shall deny Thee, I will never deny Thee"! Poor Peter! He did not yet know himself as he was to learn to know himself afterwards. He really meant what he said. Yet only a few hours later, when a young girl challenged him with being a disciple of Jesus, he denied his Master, the third time with oaths and curses.

What a different Peter in Acts iv.! How was the change effected? By the Holy Spirit of God—the Power that can change any craven coward into a wonderful witness. The Sanhedrin was the ruling body of the Jews, powerful and steeped in tradition, and the people stood in awe of them. But Peter faced them with boldness. They said "You are not to preach in the Name of Jesus again." Peter said "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye"; and off he went to preach again!

Have you young people told anybody yet that you belong to

the Saviour? He wants you to be His mouthpiece to others. He is in heaven, you upon earth. If you do not tell others of the Saviour they will not hear of Him, because they do not read their Bibles. They depend upon you to bring them the word of salvation; and may I say reverently, the Lord depends upon you too. May you make full proof of the power of the Holy Spirit in your witness for Christ!

The Power for Worship

Perhaps the simplest way to bring this part of my subject before you is to show you the difference between the worship of God as practised in Israel (what we call Judaism) and Christian worship.

There were twelve tribes in Israel, but from only one (Levi) were the priests drawn. However much a Benjamite, say, might long to be a priest he could never become one. Those from the remaining eleven tribes had to present their offerings to the Lord through the Levites: they had no right of direct access themselves. Infringements of this rule carried severe penalties (see 1 Kings xii. 31 et seq., 2 Chron. xxvi. 16-20).

Are there in the Christian church those whom God has selected to serve as priests so that those wishing to come to God have first to come to them? Read the Lord's words in Matthew xxiii. 8-10: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for One is your Master, even Christ." Again in 1 Peter ii. 5. "Ye also . . . are built up . . . an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ." Is not God's intention for all Christians in the present dispensation clear and unmistakable?

Of old the High Priest entered the tabernacle with clouds of incense rising from his hands. That incense spoke of the excellent glories of a coming Saviour. Today the youngest of us can approach God in the savour of Christ's accomplished sacrifice and Name, and give God worship.

From the earliest times what men have largely done is to carry Christians back to Judaism, and to model Christian worship on Jewish ritual. They have divided Christians into clergy and laity, ordaining some to offer worship to God and

debaring others from the privilege. In many churches there is an altar, and an altar rail to divide the sanctuary between priest and congregation. In the temple this partitioning was by means of a veil which God Himself rent from top to bottom at the moment when Jesus cried "It is finished," and died on the cross. Thus men seek to patch up and revive something which God Himself has brought to an end.

Furthermore, Jewish ritual called for sacred vessels, gorgeous clothing, jewels, incense: everything materially resplendent. These things were intended to foreshadow the glories of Christ. In Christianity we have the substance; why go back to the shadows?

Perhaps the most serious feature of this return to Jewish principles is the interference with the liberty of the Holy Spirit to lead as He will in the worship of God. The Lord Jesus made it clear in John iv. that the old materialistic method of worship was passing; "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (verse 23). Christian worship has therefore to be spiritual in character, and for that the power of the Holy Spirit is required. Apart from Him how can any one of us bring to God an acceptable offering? On the other hand, which of us, however feeble and faltering, may not by the Spirit's gracious enabling, sound acceptably in God the Father's ear the Name that is always a sweet savour to Him?

In closing then, I want to assert quite simply that the Holy Spirit of God Himself is the only Power for worship as for all else amongst the Lord's gathered people, and that it is this fact more than any other single truth which is responsible for our meeting as we do, and distinguishes us from other bodies of true Christians. It is because we own that all are brethren, and priests, as God intends they should be, that we meet as we do, recognising every true Christian, worldwide, as members of Christ's one body, and owning no other membership. We meet in a simple way where the Holy Spirit of God is free to lead and direct. This, simply, is where we stand, and what we seek to maintain. It is where we believe every Christian is free to come, and where every Christian ought to be.

L. A. JONES.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Mr. Editor,

The article in September issue by J. C. Kell, "Has this a Message for us?" certainly contains a message for all.

How times have changed as regards the number of meetings attended by the saints, especially those for worship! Nowadays the partaking together of the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning seems to suffice. It was otherwise in 1842!

Few today seem to realise what worship is, the general idea being that any religious service, even the preaching of the gospel, is entitled to the description "Divine Worship." To worship God, however, is to give Him adoration and praise. When saints are gathered together, even silent worship may be precious, but it is still worship when a suitable hymn is sung, or one expresses audibly to God the thanksgiving and adoration in the hearts of all present. To be acceptable to God such worship must be Spirit-led.

Worship is the special privilege of those who stand before the Cross, and look in wonder and awe upon that amazing sight. How can we gaze thus upon Him Who was there for us all without bursting forth into adoration and praise?

I trust the article will make many think.

Yours affectionately in Him,

F. W. MORRIS.

Hadleigh, Essex, October 1957.

MUSIC RARE

They speak to me of music rare,
Of anthems soft and low,
Of harps, and viols, and angel-choirs—
All these I could forego;

BUT

The music of the Shepherd's voice,
Which won my wayward heart,
Is the only strain I ever heard
With which I cannot part.

Anon.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

THE obligation which rests upon each individual believer to render a tribute of thanksgiving and praise to the Saviour scarcely needs stressing. The return of the Samaritan leper to give Him thanks, and the Lord's poignant enquiry "Where are the nine?" in reference to those who did not do so (Luke xvii. 17), and His outstanding commendation of Mary's action when she broke the alabaster box of ointment over His head and feet, are eloquent of the delight the Lord is pleased to find in the worship of His people, whether individually or collectively.

When gathered together for this purpose, the people of God do in fact greatly help one another. The announcing and hearty singing of suitable hymns, the reverent reading of scripture, prayers of sincere thanksgiving: such audible exercises, however faltering in the expression, may stir everyone present to offer up the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to His name.

What about those, however, who are deprived of the privilege and help of their fellow-believers in this way, perhaps only temporarily by reason of sickness? Can they be assisted in keeping the flame of loving response to the Lord burning steadily in their hearts? We believe they can. This is one purpose of the "Lord's Day Reflections" which appear in this magazine. These pieces are written, not primarily to expound the scriptures, but to present a theme for meditation which will lead the heart out in worship to God. May all our readers by this means find stimulus for their private devotions, so that praise and thanksgiving may ascend uninterruptedly to the throne of heaven.

A final word: if you know of someone who is cut off from the fellowship of other believers, please make it your business to see that he, or she, receives a copy of *WORDS OF HELP*, and point out, if necessary, how it can be used for the purpose outlined above. In so doing you will be promoting that which may abound to the glory of God.

"I desire fruit that may abound to your account."

(Phil. iv. 17.)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XIV. *His decease . . . at Jerusalem.* (Read Luke ix. 28-36.)
(Written in Rome, Lord's Day morning, 17th March, 1957)

ALTHOUGH all three accounts of the transfiguration mention the circumstance that Moses and Elias appeared on the mount and were talking with Jesus, Luke alone records the subject of their conversation. We are told they "spake of His decease (lit. "exodus") which He should accomplish at Jerusalem". To be sure, we would like to have been given details of what each one said, so as to know how far Moses and Elias understood the full import of what was discussed. But the Spirit of God, in His wisdom, has withheld these.

Is it going too far to suppose, however, that both Moses and Elias may have recalled incidents in their own lives on earth to which the Lord's own decease would furnish so striking a contrast?

There was the occasion when the people of Israel had sinned so grievously in the matter of the golden calf, and Moses did all he could to make an atonement for their sin. Although Jehovah regarded the intercession of His servant, and "repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people", there remained the righteous requirements of His government to be met. Sin cannot go unpunished with Him, and Moses was fully aware of this. So he told the people he would return to Jehovah: "peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. xxxii. 30).

How did he attempt to do this? Did he plead the merits of a coming Redeemer; the efficacy of a Sacrifice yet to be offered? On the contrary he offered himself. After confessing the greatness of the people's sin, he said to Jehovah, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—". He had but to make the suggestion to realise that what he desired was impossible; *God could not pass over sin.* So he was quick to add, "and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written".

It was a wonderful effort, and showed how deeply divine love had taken hold of his heart. Rather than that the

people should perish, Moses would have his own name blotted out of God's book. (Compare Rom. ix. 3.)

But, noble as the offer was, it could not avail with God. Measured by God's holy standard, the one who offered himself as a substitute for the people was himself sinful and unworthy. The soul that sins must die; there can be no exception to the rule that "None . . . can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him". So God had to answer Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book".

What a blessed contrast to this was the coming work of Calvary which Moses contemplated on the mount of transfiguration! Here at last was the true Lamb of God Who would take away the sin (not of Israel, merely) but of the whole world. And the sacrifice offered would not be rejected, but accepted because of the excellence of the Person Who offered it. Moses had been nothing more than a man, and sinful at that. The Lord Jesus, besides being true man, was equally Son of God: He "knew no sin", and "did no sin", and could therefore be made to be sin for His people, that they might be made "the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21).

To Thy cross we turn our eyes;
Slain that guilty worms might rise!
Precious, perfect, sacrifice!
Saviour, we adore Thee.

What chord of memory may we conjecture was stirred in the mind of Elias? There was that notable day on which his own dignity as God's representative upon earth had been overlooked by the King of Israel, and God vindicated him by a signal judgment upon those who dared to affront him.

Elijah, despite his undoubted lapse under the juniper tree, was a great prophet of God, Whose message he spoke fearlessly. Ahaziah, on the other hand, following in the footsteps of his wicked parents, added to his sins by sending to enquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover of a sickness. In doing this he not only disregarded God Himself, but slighted, in a calculated manner, His prophet, whom he knew full well (2 Kings i. 8).

But God was fully aware of what Ahaziah had done, and sent His angel to Elijah to give him a message for the king—a message of judgment. Whereupon the king, instead of humbling himself and admitting his error, sent a captain and fifty men to bring Elijah to account. It was an arrogant summons, couched in language which constituted a direct challenge to Elijah's personal dignity as God's representative: "Thou man of God, the king hath said, *Come down*". Was a man of God to be subservient to an idolatrous king?

Elijah accepted the challenge, and God vindicated His servant by sending fire from heaven to consume the insolent captain and his fifty. And similar judgment befell the second delegation which repeated the king's demand in even more disrespectful terms. Could Elijah fail to recall what had happened when his own personal position had been at stake?

At Jerusalem, an infinitely greater Person was to be challenged by those who were going to say far more dreadful things: "If Thou be the Son of God, *come down* from the cross" (Matt. xxvii. 40); and again, "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now *come down* from the cross, and we will believe Him" (ver. 42). And then, flinging their blasphemous challenges right up to the very throne of the Almighty, they added, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God" (ver. 43). Surely this would bring the fire of heaven down at last!

But no! the heavens remained as brass, and the bitter cry of the Forsaken One received no answer. The enemies of God and of His Christ were to prevail—for a short season, and only for the accomplishment of the purpose of God. Who can understand these things? No wonder the prayer had arisen, "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for My sake: let not those that seek Thee be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel" (Psa. lxi. 6). The answer was not long withheld, for we read "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. ii. 9, 10). Those who wait on God and seek Him through Christ will share that exaltation, while every

unrepentant enemy will be ashamed and confounded in that day.

How far Moses and Elias entered into the truth of such things, we cannot know now. But we ourselves rejoice, as week by week we gather to the Lord's Name to remember Him in the breaking of bread, that we are enabled, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to contemplate these holy things; and contemplating, to worship.

E. A. PETTMAN

USES OF AFFLICTION

(from Psalm cxix.)

FEW saints of God have not, at some time, passed through the deep waters of affliction. What a comfort to know beforehand that God, our God, has made all the provision needed to sustain His own in such a pathway.

Psalm cxix. contains no fewer than seven (a significant number) references to affliction, not to mention the many other scriptures dealing with the subject.

THE COMFORT OF GOD'S WORD

One who has passed the way of affliction tells us in verses 49 and 50 that God has given His word to be the comfort and hope of those so tried. Those afflicted should therefore turn to the Scriptures to find the particular "word unto Thy servant" which will prove to be the specific balm to suit each individual case. Those who wait upon God in dependence will receive His word of comfort.

THE CORRECTIVE INFLUENCE OF AFFLICTION

In verse 67 the Psalmist acknowledges that his affliction was the dealing of God with his waywardness, so that having received the correction he can exclaim "Thou are good, and doest good" (ver. 68). Are we not reminded of Hebrews xii. 6—"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth".

ITS EDUCATIONAL VALUE

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" (ver. 71). How often have the people

of God looked back after a time of sore trial and said: "Painful though it has been, I would not have missed the experience because of what the Lord has taught me in it." Such teaching has brought no mere increase of doctrinal knowledge, but a fuller understanding of the way of truth. The sense of peace in one's soul has been deepened by the raging of the storm around. *The word of God has gripped the soul, and eternal verities have become vivid and real to the eye of faith.*

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO THE AFFLICTED AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS

The afflicted one declares in verse 74 that his experience will be helpful to those looking on: "They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Thy word". This is coupled with a sense in his own soul of the faithfulness of God (ver. 75). The writer remembers a sister saying after his recovery from a critical illness: "Never again will I doubt the power of God!" Thus the experience of one brings consolation and encouragement to others, and many are strengthened in their assurance of the faithfulness of God.

DEPENDENCE UPON GOD

It is well recognised that dependence upon God is one of the most difficult lessons to learn. In affliction, however, one feels oneself beyond the aid of men, and when human resources are at an end, the soul turns more readily to God to find Him all-sufficient. Thus in verse 92 we read: "Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished". How conscious one has been that without God Himself to support, and His word on which to stay the mind, one would have perished; and what compassion one feels for those who have never learned to put their trust in God!

PRaise OUT OF THE DEPTHS

The section containing the sixth reference to affliction begins with those well-known, well-treasured words of verse 105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path". The affliction has grown till the Psalmist is afflicted

very much, verse 107, but the lamp and the light are burning steadily. And so profitable is the experience that he bursts into praise in verse 108—praise out of much affliction.

THE JOY OF DELIVERANCE

Having reached such a state of heart, and having benefited so wonderfully by his affliction, it is not surprising now to hear the Psalmist say: "Consider mine affliction, and deliver me; for I do not forget Thy law" (ver. 153). One is not likely to forget, even when delivered, the sweet and strengthening experiences whilst walking with God in affliction. Soon we shall reach our heavenly home—

And then never more shall the fears,
The trials, temptations, and woes,
Which darken this valley of tears,
Intrude on our blissful repose.

Or, if yet remembered above,
Remembrance no sadness shall raise;
They will bring us fresh thoughts of Thy love.
New themes for our wonder and praise.

JOHN A. COOTE

ECHOES OF A SWISS TOUR

*(Notes of Evening Talks at a House Party at St. Moritz,
30th July to 13th August, 1957)*

FIRST SERIES—General Subject: "The Name of Jesus,
Him Who came".

Wednesday, 31/7/57—Reading: Mark i, 1-11.

How wonderful to be able to contemplate the fact that Jesus came!

Mark introduces his, the shortest, gospel by pointing to its central Figure, "Jesus Christ—the Son of God". Attention is immediately directed to His deity—we wonder that the Son

of God Himself should come; also to His humility—Jesus Christ, the Son of Man in all perfection.

After thirty years of obscurity, Jesus came forth, heralded by John, to manifest the heart of God, not only in life but even in death. God's power, glory and greatness are vividly displayed in created things around us; but Jesus only can reveal the love of God, Who "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i.2).

We read Thee best in Him who came
And bore for us the cross of shame,
Sent by the Father from on high,
Our life to live, our death to die.

To Him who came, we owe all.

Friday, 2/8/57—Reading: Mark i, 9-34.

Through the gateway of Mark's record, the spreading ripples of Jesus' coming may be seen.

- i. He came to obey. Though unknown to John, this perfect Man humbled Himself to be baptised, thus associating Himself with the repentant. Our guide, through God's word, is the perfect example of His Son.
- ii. He came to choose disciples—not angels, but men; those who had known what it was to be lost, saved and changed; those with whom He could be intimate, and train for discipleship.
- iii. He came to deliver: the chains of demon-possession were broken in His conflict with Satan.
- iv. He came to heal. His compassion extended to Peter's mother-in-law. How many suffer spiritually, being racked by the fever of fast living? Jesus can still take by the hand and restore to health and sanity.

"Thy touch has still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall."

Tuesday, 6/8/57—Reading: Mark iv, 33-41.

Jesus directed His teaching to the disciples' minds, taking pains to unfold the meaning of each parable. Great indeed

was His concern that all should know His own glory and Person. Note carefully:

- i. His direction that they should go over together—"us" (ver. 35). Meeting trouble does not necessarily denote that a Christian has missed the way.
- ii. His sleep—that of a true Man, free of care and at peace with all.
- iii. "Carest Thou not?" They all thought the end had come; faith was at a low ebb. Of course Christ cares!
- iv. He "threatened" the wind, and said to the sea "be muzzled": strong words used to counter the devil's power.
- v. Their little faith—far better to have trusted and left Him asleep.
- vi. They feared—because of the calm: never before had they realised in such a way the glory of Him who had called them. He is still able to bring His great calm to every life.

Thursday, 8/8/57—Reading: Phil. ii, 1-11.

As from the mountain top we beheld a panorama of many peaks, so in these verses the many highlights of Christ's coming into the world are displayed together.

Believers are here exhorted to have the mind of Christ Jesus. The working of human minds, our own or one another's, does not make for agreement. His mind in all brings peace.

Equality with God was not a thing to be grasped at for Him. His mind led Him to be of no reputation, setting aside the glory and honour which were His from the beginning to become a lowly Servant, obedient to the vilest death—that of the cross.

Yet having done that, what exaltation by God! The Name of Jesus becomes higher than all, whether above, on, or below the earth. What a Name is His!

Chiefest name in earth or heaven
 To the Son of man is given;
 Hallelujah! naught shall claim
 Higher glory than Thy name.

Saturday, 10/8/57—Reading: Heb. i, 1-14.

Passing from one scripture to another, we view the same truth from different angles.

God's varied dealings with men in the past reach a climax in His last approach to men "in Son"; One not to be refused (Heb. xii, 25).

Jesus came as God's final, yet most powerful, word. Behold the glories of this method of God's revealing:

- i. "In Son"—in character rather than personality. Creation speaks, but to reveal His loving heart God chose to thrust Christ before mankind.
- ii. "Heir"—One appointed from the beginning to control the ages.
- iii. "Brightness"—One who was the shining out of the glory of God; and
- iv. One who had the express character of God, like the impress, full of meaning, on any Egyptian tomb.

This is the One who has sat Himself down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having completed by Himself all the work He came to do.

F. T. Pettman.

(To be continued)

EVANGELISING

(Extracts from the Letters of J.N.D.)

Vol. 1, page 364, Aug., 1860.

Do not feel uneasy at young brethren growing up into service. We were all young once. I am delighted when I see them getting into serious service, but I do look for pastoral care. The regular work of evangelisation is more to me than excited meetings, but if the Lord converts He converts, and we must rejoice. The excitement of the moment will pass away; what is solid will remain. One has to go through it, like all else, with God. The power of God is shown in all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.

Vol. 1, page 370, 1860.

I should also be exceedingly sorry to see that the peculiar principles of brethren, and their just and never to be loosened attachment to the assembling of the saints, led to the giving up of work among souls. It was quite the contrary at first. And if love is at work—if the *meetings* are to be blest it must be so—what works in the world blesses the meeting; only we must have the thought of the Holy Ghost really being in both . . .

Vol. 1, pages 392/3, Jan. 23, 1862.

In connection with what you tell me about evangelisation, be it of the appeal to souls, I am as far as possible from thinking it a low thing. A faithful brother who had at heart the walk of the brethren, reproached me for devoting myself too much to it, more than twenty years ago. I have no regret, far from it; I feel that other brothers have a greater gift for it; but it is a joy to me, when God gives me the grace of being occupied with that part of the work. In these last times this work is of the greatest importance. Also, God has led many people into it. With some there is what is superficial, so that a work which acts more deeply in consciences becomes also necessary; but, here at least, it is as if God would urge souls into a place of safety before the end. Thank God, there is more zeal among brethren on that side also; but I believe that, in all times, blessing within is in the measure of the spirit of evangelisation. The reason is very simple. It is the presence of God which blesses, and God is love, and it is love which makes one seek souls . . . But God loves souls, and if we do not seek them He will set His testimony elsewhere. He loves us, I believe; but He has no need of us.

Vol. 1, pages 400/1, Sept. 17, 1862.

What I should say to you would be to preach as earnestly and as devotedly as you can, to seek the salvation of the souls around you.

Vol. 1, page 466, Sept., 1864.

I have thought too little of fruit. I find that while specially happy in evangelising, my heart ever turns to the church's

being fit for Christ. My heart turns there. God knew, I suppose, that I was too weak and too cowardly for the other; but I reproach myself sometimes with want of love for souls, and above all, with want of courage, and love would give that—it always does; but in the consciousness of my shortcoming I leave all with Christ. He does after all what He pleases with us, though I do not seek to escape blaming myself through this; and if He is glorified I am heartily content with anything, save not to love Him.

Vol. 1, page 645, October, 1868.

I have no doubt of the truths I hold, and feel the word of God daily clearer. But I see so little courage to deal with the mass around me, which yet heart and head in a measure goes out after—so little dealing with men, so much with truth, precious truth, Christ's truth I know, and what the church wants; but I feel those who go evangelising so much my superiors, and yet I see so much, when I see the work, that is hardly like Paul's. Yet God overlooks want of completeness in it where there is earnestness. However, I am His servant, but when I see the courage and zeal of such as are of Paul, I am ashamed of myself.

Vol. 2, pages 10/11, 1869.

The full mind of God has opened itself out to me more largely than ever in these latter times, but I am not satisfied with myself as to my love to souls. I bow to filling up the little niche I may have been allotted, but still envy (not with an ill feeling) more active evangelists, and sometimes ask myself whether cowardice and want of zeal does not hinder one.

Vol. 2, page 28, June 5, 1869.

Evangelising is blessed work, and God bears with many errors and extravagancies in it, though they are to be regretted. . . . But all finds its level. The excitement will die away, but God's work will remain.

Vol. 2, page 76, 1870.

I feel how great the privilege of evangelists is.

Vol. 2, pages 386/7, 1875.

I should be greatly grieved if brethren ceased to be an evangelising set of Christians. Indeed, they would fade in their own spiritual standing, and get probably secretarian, not in theory but in practice, because the enlarging principle of love would not be there. Thank God, it is not as yet so. But *grace* alone can maintain the testimony. I confess I feel a sort of envy of those whom God has called to evangelise. My want of courage keeps me humble . . . The evangelist may have to go on elsewhere. . . . At the beginning brethren were engaged, and pretty much alone, in the roughest evangelising—fairs, markets, races, regattas, and everywhere in the open air. Gatherings grew up, and the care of them became needful, though evangelising went on, and was blessed, and in a measure is in many places . . . If God still calls him to evangelise, he will find the craving after souls forcing him out to do that work.

Vol. 2, page 426, Oct. 25, 1875.

I feel sometimes a little envious of those called to be evangelists—still happy that they have it—but it is good for me, and keeps me low . . . I only hope in the midst of all that is going on, the brethren may be devoted, and continue to evangelise, and increase in it, earnestly, soberly and devotedly.

Vol. 2, page 433, Feb. 11, 1876.

As regards the subject of your letter—evangelising, I should assuredly seek to serve in and promote in every way I could . . . The evangelist is the Lord's servant only, though the sympathy of brethren is most happy and desirable.

Vol. 2, page 549, Nov. 4, 1878.

I feel it of all importance that we should evangelise. I quite recognise the difference of gifts, and we cannot appropriate what is not given; still there is a love to souls, the love of Christ constraining us, which is an important element in our own state. I feel it as to myself. I do not doubt I fail in everything.

(Selected by C. A. HAMMOND).

BIBLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question

In Eph. iv. 3 we read "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (a) Do you think it is still possible to do so in this day of ruin? (b) If so, how are we to understand 2 Timothy ii. 20-21 which speaks of a great house wherein are vessels to honour, and some to dishonour? Or (c) are we to understand that the first mentioned is for the assembly, whereas the last is for the individual?

D.T.G. (Castel, Guernsey, C.I.)

Answer

(a) We think it is not only possible, but obligatory upon all, to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and the way to do this is to cultivate the moral and spiritual disposition which is essential. "Lowliness, meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (verse 2) are the qualities of mind needful in the hearts of those who seek to obey the injunction.

(b) 2 Timothy ii. appears to have in mind the sphere of Christian profession, in which are to be found "some to honour, and some to dishonour" (verse 20). From these latter a person is to purge himself out by separating from them if he himself would be a vessel to honour.

(c) Undoubtedly the exhortation in 2 Timothy ii. is addressed not so much to Timothy himself, as to anyone, and calls for individual obedience. As to Eph. iv. 3, the late W. J. Hocking wrote (Bible Monthly, Vol. VII, page 3) "While the truth applies to each unit of the unity, it is in practice applied collectively. Whether it be two, two hundred, two thousand, or more, of the followers of Christ who seek to act together, it is necessary that all should be of one mind in regard to this common relationship to Christ and to one another in order that they may keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This should be the goal of all, and of every concerted action in assembly matters."



"Be vigilant, watch. Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist, steadfast in faith. . . ."
(I Pet. v. 8, 9. New Tr.)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

We are delighted to have for publication this month an article, written while convalescing from his recent illness, by Mr. J. C. Kell, a regular contributor to WORDS OF HELP for many years, and we acknowledge the goodness of God in restoring to him a sufficient measure of health for the task. We are glad to report also that we have two further contributions from his pen: an Open Letter to young folk, under the general title "Let Days Speak", and a piece for the Lord's Day Reflection series. These will appear shortly (D.V.).

In the meantime, we invite our younger readers to send us a note *on a postcard* of any practical matter arising in the course of their Christian life on which they would like help from the Scriptures, so that *subjects of general interest* may be dealt with by Mr. Kell as he feels able, and as guided by the Lord. We are reserving space each month for suitable articles, and the Editor will be pleased to receive suggestions.

In providing this opportunity we have been guided by the consideration that in New Testament days the Lord sometimes permitted His servants to be withdrawn temporarily from active itinerant labours and oral ministry in order that they should commit what they wished to say to writing. How indebted the Church of God has been for centuries to the apostle Paul for those letters written during his imprisonment! The apostle John, too: exiled in Patmos, he was given a vision and told to "write" (Rev. i, 19). What a book we have as the outcome!

No doubt these occasions resulted from circumstances specially overruled by the Lord in order that the canon of Scripture might be completed. But the examples indicate to us that in the Lord's ordering there is a definite place for written ministry, and that we should recognise this.

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God" (Heb. xiii, 7).

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XV. "He must reign."

Read: Luke iv. 5-8; I Corinthians xv. 25;

John vi. 15; xviii. 10-11, 36.

After the sufferings of Christ there is the glory that should follow. The Man of Calvary deserves to reign. His followers long to see Him reign. The state of this world pleads that He should reign. Scripture says, "He MUST reign". And reign He shall. Glorious certainty! Grand prospect! Well may we "look beyond the long, dark night, and hail the coming Day"!

MANY centuries before Paul wrote, the prophet Isaiah had declared that "the government shall be upon His shoulder" (Ch. ix. 6); not indeed upon His shoulders, as though the task would prove an exacting one to Him; but upon His shoulder, as if to emphasize that He will take it easily in His stride. For that which would surely prove to be exhausting, nay, an insupportable burden for a mere man, will be well and fully within the competence of Him who is the Root as well as the Offspring of David.

As we peer into the future we ask how long it will be before He reigns. Psalm ii. proclaims the divine decree, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession". As to when, we believe that times and seasons are in the Father's hands (Acts i. 7), and that the Father Himself will give the kingdom to the Son of His love at the appointed time.

In the light of this, how beautiful are those occasions in the Lord's life on earth when He refused to anticipate the Father's will, or to receive His kingdom from the hands of others!

Consider first the offer made to Him by Satan at the end of the forty days temptation in the wilderness. After showing Him all the kingdoms of the world the devil said to Him:

"If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine". To receive the kingdom then would mean, would it not, that Jesus could avoid the path of suffering that entailed the cross. But what a price to pay! The Christ must first fall down and worship Satan!!

Not for an instant did the Lord consent to such an unholy bargain. Swift as lightning came His rejoinder: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve". In perfect submission to all that His Father willed, He would first finish the work given Him to do on earth, then await in heaven the Father's good pleasure. What perfection! How truly He is, as we sing, the "Patient, spotless, One"! triumphing over Satan in the place where the whole human race had failed so dismally. Let us bow in adoration at His feet.

Then there was the occasion recorded in John vi. when the people came to take Him by force to make Him a king (ver. 15), to press upon Him the reins of government. It is understandable that they should wish to do this. Had He not shown Himself able to supply all their bodily requirements? And had He not displayed His superiority over wind and wave and every power hostile to mankind? He had but to speak the word, and all became still before Him. Even the demons fled at His command!

It is recognised by all thinking men and women that unsolved economic problems lie near the root of this world's continuous unrest. Here was One who could solve them. A Man who could feed five thousand men besides women and children with no greater apparent resource than five loaves and two fishes, He can do anything. He must be given the opportunity to exercise His beneficence. How readily Pharaoh and the Egyptians passed the control of affairs to Joseph after the demonstration of *his* foresight as to the coming famine and his competence to organize the necessary relief measures so that the lives of man and beast might be preserved!

Again, however, the Lord declined the opportunity. Joseph had been "lifted up" from the dungeon to reign. The

Son of Man must first be "lifted up" to die. Not by a word of wisdom, but by His death, He would give life to the world. As He says further down in the chapter "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (ver. 52). Let us reflect upon this wonderful steadfastness of purpose which marked Him all along the way.

Yet once more an attempt was made to secure for Him something better than the denial by His own nation of His right to reign. When the soldiers came to arrest Him, Simon Peter drew his sword and energetically set about defending his Master. It was a brave, yet blundering show of loyalty. For he had not yet learned that Christ must suffer before entering into His glory.

From the use of the word "appeared" in Luke xxii. 43, we gather that the three favoured disciples were aware of the angelic strengthening given to the Lord in Gethsemane. Possibly Simon, in his ignorance, was thinking it would have been more appropriate had the hosts of heaven appeared at the moment when violence actually threatened. But the Lord disposes of that notion by declaring that more than twelve legions of angels were available to come immediately in response to a single word from Him. But how then should the Scripture be fulfilled that He must suffer and die?

As the Lord Jesus Himself explained a little later, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence". The One who had refused to receive the kingdom from Satan, or, in a moment of passing popularity, from the common people, now declined to accept it as a result of armed intervention by His own disciples. He would complete the work of Calvary, and then seat Himself down on high to await the making of His foes to be His footstool in His Father's own good time. Behold again His perfection!

"He must reign"! Of course He must! Thanks be to God He surely will.

Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning,
 Thee, my own beloved Lord!
 Every tongue Thy Name confessing,
 Worship, honour, glory, blessing,
 Brought to Thee with one accord;
 Thee, my Master, and my Friend
 Vindicated and enthroned,
 Unto earth's remotest end
 Glorified, adored and owned!

(Frances R. Havergal)

E. A. PETTMAN.

HOW CAN I KNOW GOD'S PLAN FOR MY LIFE?

(Please read: Acts xxii, 6-15; Rom. xii, 1-21)

THIS is a question which arises sooner or later in the mind of most if not all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a certain amount of danger in the question, an underlying hesitation to leave the matter entirely in God's hands. Jacob had learned the answer, at least partially, but fell into the error of trying to help God to carry out the plan. Consequently, he was frequently getting into unnecessary difficulties. For instance, God had said the elder shall serve the younger. To obtain the blessing of the firstborn, Jacob deceived his father, incurred Esau's wrath, and had to flee, and under God's discipline he in turn was deceived about Leah and Joseph.

There is, however, a right way of asking the question, which is exemplified in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He asked it in the form "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix, 6). Before he got the answer he had certain experiences to pass through. He was blind, not only physically, but unable to see the path he was to walk in. He had to wait three days. He neither ate nor drank. He prayed. In these four things are deep lessons for us. We are totally unable to answer the question by using our senses, but is it not true that when the question arises in our minds we look around at what others are doing and wonder which of their pathways in God's service we should follow? We may even attempt to imitate one or more of the servants of God known to us. We

are slow to realise that in ourselves we are blind and unable to discern God's plan for our lives.

Then again, we are impatient: Saul had to wait three days (Acts ix, 9). It may be that we are not yet equipped for the service which God has in purpose for us. We have to learn to wait patiently for Him. We are so inclined to say, "Meanwhile, I must do something." It seems to me there is an example of this in Acts i. The disciples had been told by the Lord an outline of His plan for their lives (see Luke xxiv, 47-49), but to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Instead of waiting for this power they resorted to drawing lots in order to choose a replacement for Judas. The lot fell on Matthias, of whom we never hear again. God filled the vacancy with Paul (see Rom. i, 1; I Cor. i, 1; ix, 1-5, etc.), and thus the "twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. xxi, 14) were completed. So let us wait patiently for God's answer when we ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Saul of Tarsus neither ate nor drank during those three days. We know little about fasting in these days. It is a matter for individual conscience how far the fasting should be literal, but if there is deep sincerity in the one who is seeking the Lord's plan for his (her) life there certainly will be abstention from self-indulgence as well as from the many profitless ways in which the world, the flesh and the devil occupy the time and the minds of the unsaved.

"Behold he prayeth" (Acts ix. 11). The desire to know what the Lord would have him to do was not just a passing aspiration of Saul. He persevered in prayer. How often we pray for something and then forget all about it, perhaps piously saying "Well, I have left it in God's hands!" We have the examples of the Lord Himself and of Paul praying three times, and also the exhortation to "continue instant in prayer" (Rom. xii. 12). Summing up, therefore, if we sincerely desire to know God's plan for our lives, we must abandon all attempt at planning them ourselves, we must wait patiently for Him to show His will, our conduct must be consistent with the earnestness of our desire, and the matter must be continually a theme of our prayers.

There is a helpful passage in the apostle Paul's inspired letter to the saints in Rome, written many years later, which carries on the same lines of exhortation (Rom. xii. 1-2). This exhortation is not addressed to new converts, but to those who have learned that the question of their sins has been entirely settled and they have peace with God. They have died unto sin and are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, are justified before God on the principle of faith, and there is no condemnation, and no separation. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God"—what a powerful appeal, calling for our whole-hearted response, is in this phrase! What is demanded of us? "To present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (intelligent) service." Our souls are saved; "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"; it remains our responsibility to present our *bodies* a living sacrifice", etc. Here is an amplification of the statement that Saul of Tarsus "did neither eat nor drink" for those three days. How easy it is for us to be satisfied with our salvation, and the security of our standing before God, and to ignore the practical day-to-day conduct that should mark us! Our bodies are to be a *living* sacrifice, active, energised by the Holy Spirit, so therefore holy and acceptable unto God. Are we not all conscious how much we fail in this?

The next clause surely points out the great danger. "Be not conformed to this world"—The Lord Himself said "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John xvii, 14, 15). In practice we find the ways and example of the unconverted world around us are a constant influence tending to draw us into conformity with it. What is the antidote to this tendency? "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind". Constant reading and meditating on the Scriptures, and particularly on the Person and life of Christ, will renew the mind and transform the conduct. But what is the object in view? "That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God": "The will of God" includes His plan for our

lives, bringing us back to the question heading this article. This proving is a continuous process, depending on our response to the exhortation.

Finally, therefore, I conclude that God's plan for our lives is not necessarily or normally revealed to us in one concise statement, though it was so in the case of the Apostle Paul through Ananias, but may be unfolded to us from time to time dependent upon our practical conduct.

May the Lord bless this meditation to writer and readers and make it fruitful for His glory!

J. C. KELL

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XXV 19 — XXVII 46

IN this portion we continue to see how God sets apart Messiah's line. Abraham had many sons, but only Isaac was chosen. Isaac had two sons, but Jacob was marked as the one through whom the blessings would flow. Afterwards we shall see Jacob and his twelve sons. All this is very important in connection with Messiah's place in the world; all the unfit were excluded from His line. The portion deals with the birth of Jacob and Esau, and the sale of his birthright by Esau; the experiences of Isaac during the famine; and the bestowal of the blessings upon Jacob and Esau.

xxv. 19-26 Like Abraham, Isaac had to show patience; it was twenty years before Jacob and Esau were given to him. Isaac was also a man of prayer (verse 21). In all the circumstances of Jacob's and Esau's birth God's sovereign election is displayed (cf. Rom. ix); the Jews objected to the gospel going to the Gentiles; but Paul lays down that God is supreme, that He signifies His good pleasure and His will because He is God. This historical incident proves it: before Jacob and Esau were born, before they had done anything, God told Rebekah that the elder would serve the younger. That was His purpose: so also it was only afterwards that Paul's actions justified God's choice (see Gal. i. 15). Jacob trusted God; Esau, on the contrary, was refractory, he cared for present things. The character of Edom was also indicated from the very first; God knew it beforehand (cf. Mal. i. 2, 3). Edom was long subject to Israel, and when Edom dis-

appeared, Israel remained (verse 23). God's predestination may present difficulties sometimes; it should not if we believe that God is sovereign.

Jacob indicated his character at once (verse 26); he took advantage of his rival. And it was so until he received a new name. Israel shows how the grace of God can be superior to the force of our nature. Esau was a true son of Nimrod (verse 27); what he liked he did, without caring about God or his parents. But Jacob was upright; he stood true to his calling as son of Abraham. He was fifteen when Abraham died, but he had learned that, though a pilgrim and stranger in the land, his posterity would one day possess it.

Isaac loved Esau, whose character was in contrast with his own; but Rebekah loved Jacob (verse 28). Favouritism in a family always bears lamentable fruit.

xxv. 29-34. Esau did not care for the future; God's promise to Abraham was nothing to him. Being "profane", i.e., one who does not esteem God's word, he desired Jacob to give him something to eat, and caring only for the present, for red pottage sold his birthright. It is very easy to judge Esau, but we have many birthrights ourselves; do we often sacrifice them for present things? Jacob made full use of his opportunity; but he was moved by faith, for there was no present advantage from it.

xxvi. 1-5. The famine tempted Isaac to go down to Egypt, a type of the world outside the spiritual domain (the Philistines were, on the other hand, the enemies of God's people in the land). Jehovah appeared to Isaac; the blessings given to Abraham were confirmed, and we are shown how God regarded Abraham: God prized obedience more than anything else (verse 5). This virtue shines more than any in our Lord.

xxvi. 6-11. So Isaac did not go down into Egypt, but dwelt in Gerar. The incident with Abimelech shows that trust in God does not alter the natural man. In the N.T. it is shown that man's nature is corrupted, that nothing can be done to improve it, and that the way of obedience is by believing that our old man was crucified with Christ. In the O.T. the fruit of the evil nature is made manifest. Isaac was not superior

to others, who all had evil incidents in their lives. Isaac was guilty of deceit, and his deception seems to have influenced Rebekah and Jacob, for they deceived Isaac when he was old: Jacob, who deceived his father, was deceived by Laban and, later, by his sons. But Isaac obeyed God and remained in Canaan; therefore he was blessed (verse 12). It is a signal example of how God honours obedience; it reminds us of the history of our Lord.

xxvi. 13-23. Wells, in God's word, are a figure of the refreshment that God gives. The Lord brought refreshment (John iv. 14) and the means of refreshment for others (John vii. 37, 38). That was Isaac's character during his stay in the land. When conflicts for the possession of the wells arose, Isaac did not strive, but gave way. So the Lord, when He was not received in one city, went to another; the same should apply to those who follow Him. The Philistines are a type of the Pharisees who had stopped the wells, but the Lord un-stopped them.

xxvi. 26-31, remind us of Christ. The chief priests saw that there was good in Him, yet did not want Him. The incident is a figure of the nations seeking Israel's alliance during the millennium.

xxvi. 34, 35. Esau despised God and his parents, and would not keep himself separate from the Canaanites.

xxvii. 1-40. Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to things to come (Heb. xi. 20). What he said to his sons was the absolute truth as to their future. The first verses present a piteous sight of Isaac, now old, but occupied with present things. Isaac's spiritual life seems to have been bright at first, then clouded, and at the end bright again. At this time he seems to be guided, even in the spiritual matters connected with the promise, by his natural appetite: a very low level indeed. Isaac bestowed the blessing (verses 28, 29) by faith; his soul was in touch with God. Isaac thought it was Esau, but God knew better than he; God's blessing was for Jacob, and it was given to Jacob. The nations are not mentioned in this blessing, as in Abraham's (Gen. xxii, 18); this is why in Gal. iii. 16, we find Abraham but not Isaac referred to.

Esau heard that he had lost the blessing, but there was no repentance, only the hope that it might be changed. The gross deception by Rebekah and Jacob was not only morally wrong, but quite unnecessary. They showed their faith by valuing the promises, but they could not trust God to bring Jacob into them. The result of their crooked conduct was that both had to suffer under God's government. Jacob was exiled, and Rebekah never saw him again. In spite of her failures, however, Rebekah was true in faith in that she did not want Jacob to marry a daughter of the Canaanites (verse 46).
J.E.R.

BREAKING OF BREAD

IN his inspired first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul begins by referring to his own calling as an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and he addresses it to the church of God at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

The first epistle treats of many truly important things, and has a specially significant reference to the Lord's Supper. Why is it called "Supper"? This is the last meal of the day. Is it not because it is the last meal of the day of grace in which those addressed are mentioned as living? "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come". There is a word of warning added: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat". Let him make sure that he understands the simple significance of what he is doing, and that his motive in doing it is pure. The cup implies its contents, and has surely no significance apart from its contents. One may here remember the Lord's own words: "The cup which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it" (John xviii. 11).

The Breaking of Bread is a test of reciprocated love from a thoroughly grateful heart. "We love Him because He first loved us". The Lord Jesus Christ Himself has promised to

be present where two or three are gathered to His name, and by faith we hear His appeal: "This do in remembrance of me".

I well remember my first breaking of bread. An old brother in the Lord, knowing that I was a Christian, asked me if I had ever complied with the Lord's personal request to be remembered in the breaking of bread. I had to say I had not. Then, knowing that I knew of the imminence of the Lord's coming, he asked me what I would say if He came at that very moment and enquired of me why I had not done the only personal thing He had asked His own to do in remembrance of Him. I had to acknowledge that I should be speechless. It would not be of any use to plead the confusion of Christendom, and thus my heart compelled me to ask for fellowship with the few that I knew were breaking bread in simple faith, and in the manner described in the Bible. I have never regretted the step I took then, and I have learned to admire the beauty and simplicity of what the Lord Himself laid down.

What confusion Christendom has made of the breaking of bread, quenching the Spirit by officialdom, and even introducing blasphemous idolatry into it! A single loaf symbolizing the one body of which the Lord Jesus is Head, as well as His own physical body, broken and distributed in the fellowship of the one body, and a little poured out wine as a memorial of His shed blood: these emblems are surely available to the twos and threes gathered by the Holy Spirit to His Name. Can anyone plead he has not the opportunity of doing this in a humble and simple manner?

Surely the mention in Acts of the breaking of bread being associated with the first day of the week is sufficient evidence of its propriety. What day more appropriate than the resurrection day, the beginning of the completely new era, such as had never been before and never will be again once "He who lets" has been "taken out of the way". It is the bride's privilege while waiting for the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 6-9).

G. S. PURNELL

ADOPTION

(Extract from a letter dated 24.11.52)

Dear Brother W—,

You ask for scriptural help as to "adoption" . . . the Greek word "whyotheesia" occurs five times (Rom. viii. 15, 23; ix. 4; Gal. iv. 5; Eph. i. 5) in the New Testament. It means "adoption" or "sonship". Usually it is translated by the former term, but J.N.D. uses "sonship" in Gal. iv. 5, and W.K. in other instances.

In Eph. i. 5, we learn that sonship for present day believers was in God's purpose before the foundation of the world, and He "marked us out beforehand for adoption through Christ Jesus to Himself". In Gal. iv. 4-6, we are told when adoption was made effective: "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His son . . . that we might receive sonship". This relationship is a present thing, for because ye *are* sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father". This present relationship of sonship is confirmed by the apostle in Rom. viii. 15, where we read, "Ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father".

But although we already by faith possess and enjoy the blessings of sonship we are in "an earthly tabernacle house", and we are thereby hampered until the full blessings of Christ's redemption and of our adoption are made good to us, and we receive new bodies. The apostle says, "We also ourselves groan in ourselves, *awaiting adoption*, that is, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23).

The other instance is in Rom. ix. 5. Paul is there enumerating the special privileges of the Israelites as Jehovah's chosen nation, and foremost among them is adoption or sonship; "my brethren . . . who are Israelites; whose is the adoption . . ." Jehovah said of the seed of Abraham, who were bondmen to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, "Israel is My son, even My firstborn" (Exod. iv. 22). Among all the nations of the earth, Israel had the honoured place of having "received the adoption".

From these scriptures we learn that adoption or sonship signifies the mark of special favour and dignity which God bestows upon those who believe in His Son in the day of His rejection on earth. Thus we become *sons* of God by our calling and adoption, and *children* of God by our new birth.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

W. J. HOCKING

CORRESPONDENCE

Re the Article in January WORDS OF HELP entitled "Five Smooth Stones", might not the application to "preparation" for gospel preaching and ministry be carried a stage further?

I have found it helpful to my own soul, as well as useful for ministry to others, to have more than one subject in preparation at a time (not necessarily five!). This has usually been the case before I went to C....., or H....., or S....., or B..... H..... When the time came, if I spoke at all, it was not necessarily on the subject I thought I was going to use, but on one of the other "stones", the selection of the particular subject being a matter for guidance at the time. In fact for many years I have usually had chits of paper in my pocket-book with notes and reference on various subjects, often not directly related to one another—stones in process of smoothing by the water of the Word.

Has it not sometimes occurred, when there have been two or more speakers, that one of them has spoken on a subject which had no connection with what has gone before or followed after? Had he only *one* stone, and felt constrained to use it?

Perhaps readers will ponder over these points.

J. C. KELL

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVI

MAY, 1958

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

THE EDITOR'S POSTBAG for March contained an unusual assortment of encouragement and challenge.

It was cheering to receive a letter reading "I have very much enjoyed the piece 'He Must Reign'. It should set chords vibrating in every true heart." Another, who took the Magazine with him to read whilst travelling on business thousands of miles away from the U.K., testifies "God spoke to me through what I read in WORDS OF HELP; you will never quite know how much it meant to me."

For these acknowledgments of blessing received we are humbly grateful to the Lord. May all who take the pen to assist in this ministry feel encouraged by such reminders that the Lord is still pleased to use the channel of writing to convey help and comfort to His people.

The other side of the picture may be gathered from the remarks—"I do not take WORDS OF HELP; quite frankly I have no time to read it"; and from another quarter, the complaint "When the Publisher's letter last December asking for an increase in circulation was read in our assembly, a number expressed the desire to have the Magazine; but so far no copies have been received."

A Post Card or telephone call direct to the Publisher will ensure that any breakdown in the arrangements for distribution is quickly remedied. But exactly how best to tackle the problem of those who cannot spare time to glean freely the good things which others have toiled to provide, we are at a loss to decide! Perhaps the personal testimony of those who *have* derived spiritual enjoyment and profit from their reading will prove to be the most effective stimulus and recommendation.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good:
blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

Psalm xxxiv. 8.

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XVI: "*But He could not be hid*"

(Read: Mark vii. 24.)

"THE glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God" (Mark i. 1) are unfolded in this gospel from the primary point of view of Jesus as the perfect servant of Jehovah. He made Himself of no reputation ("emptied Himself") and so we read "He suffered not the devils to speak because they knew Him"; again, He charged the cleansed leper to say nothing to any man; again, He ate with publicans and sinners; again, He straitly charged the unclean spirits that they should not make Him known; again, go home to thy friends and tell them how great things *the Lord* (i.e., Jehovah-God) hath done for thee; again, after raising the twelve-year-old damsel, He charged them straitly that no man should know it; again, when He had sent the multitude away, He departed into a mountain to pray. In no instance did He seek His own glory or the praise of men. When he underlined the fact that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins by healing the sick of the palsy, He did it in such a way that those present glorified *God*. Thus we reach the point where He entered into an house and would have no man know it, *but He could not be hid*. As servant ("bondman" indeed), His life was so entirely devoted to the One He came here to serve that, notwithstanding His making Himself, of no reputation, and humbling Himself, the very perfection of His service made His concealment impossible.

While this theme is characteristic of Mark's gospel, it is not absent from Matthew and Luke. In the former the wise men from the east found the babe, Jesus, in the house in Bethlehem, where *He was unknown* to Herod and the chief priests and scribes. In Luke the shepherds found the babe, Jesus, in the manger while still *there was no room* in the inn.

What a perfect example the Lord Jesus sets us in this character! Not only the Thessalonians but, surely, all to whom the gospel has come not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, should become followers of the Lord and should serve (as bondmen) the living and true God, and

be waiting for His Son from heaven (see I Thess. i. 5, 6, 9, 10). The flesh in us seeks some prominence, some glory, even in our service of God. This is to be resisted; the example of Christ Jesus is to be kept before our souls (Phil. ii. 5), and only the perfection of our service should make it impossible for us to be hidden. How deeply challenging this is!

In a certain sense this characteristic of the Lord Jesus has persisted throughout the centuries until today. Over and over again the holy record of His life, death, resurrection, ascension, present glory and imminent return have been attacked. Science, rationalism, agnosticism, unitarianism have attacked the facts of the incarnation and the divine revelation of the Scriptures. Ritual and mysticism have been used by Satan in his attempt to obscure the truth. But notwithstanding all these the fact has remained true that *He could not be hid*. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God". "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". "Christ crucified" is "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. i. 18, 21, 23, 24).

Solemn thought that the time is drawing near—how near none can say—when all believers in the Lord Jesus will be caught up to be with Him for ever, and in place of the present irrepressible testimony of the Holy Spirit ensuring that "He cannot be hid", "God shall send them strong delusion, that they shall believe a lie" (II Thess. ii. 11). "That wicked one" will be revealed, "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders", but the Lord shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of His coming. "Behold He cometh with clouds; and *every eye shall see Him*". In a new sense, then, it will be true that "He could not be hid".

One further thought in conclusion: Moses, having been in the presence of God, was unaware that His face shone, but the Israelites could not steadfastly behold his face. Now "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord". "The God who spoke that out

of darkness light should shine has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. iii. 18; iv. 6. N.T.) In greater or less measure that knowledge shines forth from the life of every believer in the Lord Jesus, unconscious as we may be of it ourselves. The Lord said to His disciples "Ye are (not "ought to be") the light of the world." The apostle Paul, by the Spirit of God, told the Philippians that they shone as lights in the world among a crooked and perverse generation.

On the one hand the weakness, failure, and worldliness of Christians tend to dim the light shining out of them, but on the other the growing darkness of indifference and scepticism makes even that dim light more apparent, and from the individual who is wholeheartedly faithful to his Lord, the light shines with greater brilliance. In any event, the light of the testimony cannot be hid. May we let it so shine before men that . . . they may glorify our Father in heaven. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be **made manifest** in our body"; and to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**" (II Cor. iv. 10; Gal. ii. 20). Should not these things be true of us, and of all who have trusted in Christ, i.e. that His life in us **cannot be hid**?

J. C. KELL

THE SILVER CUP

Read: Genesis xlv.

THE sons of Jacob are in Egypt again, for "the famine was sore in the land" (Gen. xliii. 1). Faced with death, they go into Egypt to buy bread, and, on this occasion, Benjamin is with them, for "The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, 'Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you'" (ver. 3). Reluctantly, and under compulsion of circumstances beyond his control, Jacob has consented to his going. His fears are loudly expressed. He speaks of bereavement without confidence of blessing. He cannot say "God meant it unto good" (Ch. 50. 20). These are to be the confident words of Joseph whose faith has reached out to apprehend

the purposes of God. In the face of Jacob's distress, Judah has offered himself as "Surety for the lad" (Ch. xlv. 32), and herein is one of those precious flashes of the character of Christ which come with a thrill to our hearts. The worth of Judah's undertaking is to be tested and found to be sincere, but he was not called upon to pay the price. There is only One who will (and could) "give His life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45). He will come of the tribe of Judah, and during the intervening years there will be many foreshadowings of Him, for His perfect sacrifice, in the giving of Himself, occupies the mind of Heaven, and overflows to earth for the comfort and worship of spiritual men.

Benjamin was the only son of Jacob born in Canaan (Gen. xxxv.). Rachel "the beautiful and well favoured" died in giving birth to him whom she named Ben-oni—"son of my sorrow". The death of that which is joy to the flesh and pleasure to the eye brings in the "Son of the right hand" (Gen. xxxv. 18), type of the Man of Sorrows now exalted at the right hand of the Father (Rom. viii. 34). It is well to reflect upon the grace that presents the youngest son of Jacob in the dual character of "Son of sorrow" and "Son of the right hand". Jacob loved him and was comforted in him after the loss of Joseph, and we are reminded of the words of the Man of Sorrows, "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again" (John x. 17). He rejoiced in perfect appreciation of the Father's love. It sustained Him as He stood alone while the forces of evil were gathering against Him. The sustaining power of the Father's love is available to His own also, for "The Father Himself loveth *you*" (John xvi. 27).

Benjamin raises no objection to being sent into Egypt, though he was aware that the despot ruler had required his presence, and that "The man who is the lord of the land spake roughly" to his brethren, and took them for "spies of the country" (Ch. xlii. 30). Thus, in quiet dependence, he is with the sons of Jacob in the presence of the one who is "As Pharaoh" (Ch. xlv. 18). There is a stillness—a quiet spirit of obedience and humility portrayed in Benjamin. He speaks no word that is

recorded in Scripture. He is a type of the One "Who shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Isa. xlii. 2), and all is in keeping with his names, significant of sorrow and exaltation to come—of death and life eternal.

The sons of Jacob are approaching their testing time, though, with so many evidences of grace on the part of the great ruler, they are unaware of it. Benjamin alone, of all that company, had no part in the past of his brethren. His conscience could be clear indeed concerning the lad of seventeen sold into slavery. It is beautiful to see the indications of affection and understanding between Joseph and Benjamin as a gift five times greater than that to the others is passed from the table of the lord of Egypt to the youngest son of Jacob. It is on the morrow, after the feast of refreshment by the grace of Joseph, that the time of testing comes. It is here that, in type, the character of Christ is again displayed. And, as the psalmist called for an instrument of ten strings (Psa. xxxiii. 2) upon which to utter his praise, so more than one among the persons of that hour was needed to show, even in type, the beauty of the One "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2). There is Judah, with the burden of suretyship; Joseph, yearning for reconciliation with his brethren—awaiting their repentance; and Benjamin, silent, innocent—but the cup is in his sack!

Joseph had waited long years for the unfolding of the purposes of God in regard to Jacob and his sons. There is seen in his character such patience as is honouring to God, and is, indeed, in type a portrayal of the Divine patience. It is unthinkable that the situation which arose from envy and led on to hatred and then to malice should be allowed to drift into a settled state in which man in the flesh had his way and sin was unrevealed and unrepented. It may well be that, from the moment of hearing the dream of Pharaoh, Joseph saw the hand of God at work, but the seven years of plenty were years of waiting for him. And now, in the time of famine, he has heard their first words of self-judgment: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother" (Gen. xlii. 21). The sons of

Leah and the sons of the bondwomen are confessing their guilt, too long forgotten in the years of plenty. But it is not enough to do this in the language of the Hebrews, though Joseph, unbeknown by them, had heard and understood. Would they place themselves in the place of judgment? Would they be identified with Benjamin, for he is to stand condemned—the silver cup is in *his* sack?

“As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away” (Ch. xlv. 3). It was the morning of sorrow and fear of judgment, but it brought in the day when “Joseph made himself known to his brethren” (Ch. xlv. 1). They had been on their way home. Now Simeon was reunited with them; Judah was relieved of his suretyship, for Benjamin was safe. Journeying, each with his own memories of the kindness—the grace—of Zaphnaph-paaneah, saviour of the world (Ch. xli. 45). But Benjamin’s gift had been five times as much as the others’, a memory calculated to uphold him in the coming trial. The silver cup is to be found in his sack—a symbol of redemption as well as authority, as though mercy and judgment are brought together in one vessel for the outpouring of the purposes of God in love.

The search “began at the eldest, and left at the youngest” (Ch. xlv. 12). Slowly, inexorably, the search proceeds. Each sack is examined. One feels the atmosphere of suspense as each of the sinful sons of Jacob is exonerated. As we read that “The cup was found in Benjamin’s sack”, the words of Mrs. C. F. Alexander’s hymn come to mind:

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin.

The design of God unfolds. The unprotesting submission of Benjamin is a beautiful foreshadowing of the humble Man of Sorrows of whom Isaiah writes, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth” (Isa. liii. 7). Joseph hears the longed-for expression of his brethren, “How shall we clear

ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (Gen. xlv. 16), and listens to Judah, "Thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father . . . Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren" (ver. 32, 33). The voice is the same as that which Joseph as a lad had heard, but then it spoke of profit and of selling him into bondage (Ch. xxxvii. 26, 27). The surety is ready to redeem his pledge: the work, made possible by "the obedience of one" (Rom. v. 19) is complete, and Joseph weeps with joy as he makes himself known to his brethren. "Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near" (Ch. xlv. 4).

By the same path, and by the grace of Divine means, we too have drawn near, "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13).

So nigh, so very nigh to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He.

EDWARD T. WOOD

DRIVING AWAY THE FOWLS

Read: Genesis xv. 11.
Galatians i. 8, 9.

ABRAM'S request for a sign from God by which to be assured of his inheritance of the land was by no means a mark of unbelief, for it is expressly noted in a previous verse that he "believed in the Lord", and that the Lord "counted it to him for righteousness". Furthermore, his prayer was answered by the rite of covenant which God Himself entered into in confirmation of His promise.

Abram was told to take one each of the clean creatures used in sacrifice, to divide them (except the birds), and to lay the pieces in a double row one against the other so that "a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp" might pass between them (ver. 17). In this way he would have it made clear to

him that his blessing would depend upon sacrifice, and that God's promise would be ratified by a solemn covenant on His part. The horror of great darkness which came upon Abram (ver. 12) was designed to impress upon him the holiness of God.

It is good to reflect that whilst on the one hand divine holiness betokens the solemnity of God's judgment against the sinner, it guarantees on the other to those who believe the abundance of God's mercies, since these have been righteously procured. How deeply thankful men should be that forgiveness, and all the blessings that go with it, are not only the fruit of God's grace, but are secured to them by Christ's full answer on the cross to every claim that God's justice could make! Truly "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa. lxxxv. 10).

In verse 11, however, a circumstance is mentioned which may easily be overlooked. Nevertheless it has considerable significance. When the fowls of the air came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away, putting to flight with all necessary energy creatures which threatened to interfere with, or defile, the sacrifice. We submit that in this action he was manifesting a divinely given zeal, teaching the lesson that it is the duty of every believer to guard the atoning work of Calvary against the tamperings of wicked men.

It is interesting to note by the way that the Hebrew words for "birds" (ver. 10) and "fowls" (ver. 11) are totally different. The former is used of birds in the sacrifices (e.g., Lev. xiv) and of birds generally; the latter occurs infrequently, and in the A.V. is twice translated "ravenous bird". The fowls which Abram drove off may be linked with those of Matt. xiii. 4, 19, denoting agents of the wicked one, and his vigorous defence of the sacrifice may be compared with the action of Rizpah in 2 Samuel xxi. 10.

One of the great evils of our day lies in the refusal of many true believers to exercise the judgment they should in respect of teachings which are fundamentally wrong; perversions of the truth which dishonour both God and Christ, and are detrimental to the welfare of the Lord's people; and furthermore

which deny to those in the darkness of sin and unbelief the unmistakable testimony they so direly need as to the one and only way of salvation for men. Indeed, we believe there are many occasions in Scripture which show that God is anything but unmindful of those who by their actions, if not their words, becloud the essential glory of the work of Christ.

Consider for example the stern rebuke, and indeed severe punishment, which Moses brought upon himself by smiting the rock instead of speaking to it as God had told him to do, when called upon once again to provide the people of Israel with water (Num. xx, 7-12). On the first occasion, at Rephidim, God Himself had ordered that the rock should be smitten (Ex. xvii. 6); the second time, at Kadesh, His command was "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water", etc. An unimportant difference, do you say? God did not judge it to be so. And the reason why He regarded Moses' disobedience so gravely may well have been that His eye was looking forward to the day when His own blessed Son, the Rock of His providing for human need (I Cor. x. 4) should be smitten at Calvary as a never-to-be-repeated sacrifice for sin. Any suggestion, however indirect or unintentional, which would tend to give the impression that Christ might need to die a second time would throw doubt upon the finality and acceptability to God of His first offering of Himself. This God will not permit. How insistent the Spirit of God is in Hebrews (Ch. ix. 24—x. 18) that Christ was once offered, in studied contrast with the ceaseless repetition of sacrifices in the past dispensation.

Men may indulge in foolish doubting, to their souls' loss and distress. But there is no uncertainty with God. He has given assurance to all men as to the abiding efficacy of the work of Calvary by raising Jesus from the dead, and seating Him at His own right hand on high (Rom. iv. 24, 25). Woe be to anyone who dares to misrepresent what God has so plainly declared!

Then there is the striking case of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, in 2 Kings v. Naaman the Syrian had been cured by the prophet as an act of pure grace. He had brought with him from the King of Syria a handsome gift (ver. 5) which he

intended to bestow in return for such healing as he could obtain in Israel. But he had to learn that God's grace cannot be purchased. His gift was therefore refused by Elisha (ver. 16), for there must be no shadow of doubt as to God's mercies being free. It must be made abundantly clear that penury is no bar to salvation.

This lesson will be the more emphatic when it is remembered that Naaman was outside God's chosen people. Even if children might expect to partake of the family bounty gratuitously, surely a stranger must expect to pay for any favours he obtains! But no: on the common ground that *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God, Jew and Gentile alike are justified *freely* by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. iii. 24).

Then see once again how severely God judged the sin of misrepresentation! When the cleansing had taken place, and Naaman was on his way home, the covetous Gehazi, seeing an opportunity for self-enrichment, followed after Naaman, and, in his master's name, demanded the reward that Elisha had previously refused. This action was calculated to mislead Naaman into thinking that after all some recompense was due from him, that there was some contribution he could make to his healing.

God, however, saw the deception, and when Gehazi returned home he found Elisha waiting for him with a word of terrible judgment: "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and to thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow" (ver. 27). With what sore judgment will God surely deal with those who seek to impose upon perishing men and women a charge for the mercies of God, mercies indeed for which the Lord Jesus has already paid with His own precious blood all that God required! "Freely ye have received freely give" must be a cardinal rule with the Lord's servants. (See also I Cor. ix. 18.)

It is in harmony with these warning incidents from the Old Testament that the opening verses of the epistle to the Galatians contain strong words concerning those who corrupt in any wise the gospel of God. In language surprisingly blunt

and forceful the apostle declares: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8, 9).

Such an uncompromising denunciation of those who preach any gospel but the true one may well startle those today who adopt an attitude of what they term "charitable toleration" towards false teachers and misleading doctrines. But is the Lord's servant to tolerate those whom the Spirit of God execrates? Giving way to those who pervert the vital truths of the Christian faith is not of God. In every community of believers where compromise of this kind has been practised the door has been opened wide to every form of doctrinal error, and this in turn has led to wrong behaviour, as the principle that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Cor. xv. 33) has inevitably worked itself out. And alas! once evil has come in, human strength seems unequal to the task of eradicating it again. Little wonder that the apostles lent no countenance to any sort of defection from fundamental truth!

Lest any of our readers should dare to assert that the declamations of Galatians i. were the wild words of an overwrought zealot endeavouring to bolster up a failing cause—irreverently disregarding the fact that the Spirit of God set His seal on what Paul wrote—turn again to the second epistle of Peter and read *his* warnings against the false teachers who would bring in what he declares to be "damnable heresies" (Ch. ii. 1). Read indeed that whole chapter to see the wholesome attitude of indignation which the apostle displayed, and, by his example calls for, against those whose teaching is contrary to the truth of God.

Again, see the importance which the apostle John set upon knowing the truth and walking in it (II John 4), and observe his command: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (*i.e.*, the doctrine of Christ), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth

him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (ver. 10, 11). No doubt this Scripture has been misused at times to justify the discourteous conduct of Christians towards one another over differences of interpretation and judgment which could not by any stretch of imagination be regarded as perversions of fundamental truth. Even so, however, has the scripture *no* proper application to the apostates and apostacy of our own day?

Finally, Jude exhorts the faithful to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (ver. 3), and goes on to condemn unreservedly "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

May the Lord increase the number of those who will be prepared to guard with vigilance and zeal every truth of the Christian faith vital both for the glory of God and the welfare of men's souls, and drive away most strenuously every "fowl" of the air, however plausible and attractive in appearance, who is guilty of:—

- (a) detracting from the *perfection of Christ's Person* as the sacrifice;
- (b) detracting from the sufficiency of His *once* offering Himself;
- (c) detracting from free grace by teaching that law-keeping or other *works* are necessary for salvation;
- (d) making "gain" out of the Lord's service;
- (e) any other modification in the "glad tidings" enunciated in the Scriptures;
- (f) teaching that conduct in daily life need not correspond with the truth held;
- (g) compromising with "religious" persons who deny the doctrine of Christ—the Father and the Son.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Mr. Editor,

While I have enjoyed reading the helpful article in March issue entitled "How can I know God's Plan for my Life?", I must join issue on the question of Matthias, whose selection by lot to fill the vacancy in the apostolic band caused by the defection of Judas Iscariot (Acts i.) is cited by the writer as an example of hasty action in circumstances which called for patient waiting for the power of the Holy Ghost.

I do not at all see that there is scriptural support for this view. Peter was guided by what was written beforehand in the book of Psalms (cix. 8), and quoted scripture as his authority. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given, so they proceeded to cast lots according to the approved Jewish custom. (See Lev. xvi. 8; Num. xxvi. 55; xxxiii. 54; xxxiv. 13, etc.). Moreover they prayed for guidance before they acted, and they accepted the disposing of the lot as the Lord's answer to their prayers (see Prov. xvi. 33).

Why question their action? God does not. The Holy Spirit records in Acts ii. 14, "Peter, standing up with the eleven"—see also Chap. vi. 2. One of the qualifications for membership of the apostolic band was that he must be "a witness with us of His resurrection". Is Matthias not one of those spoken of by Paul in I Cor. xv. 5—"After that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." Then after enumerating other appearances Paul says "and last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (ver. 8). How could Paul fulfil the qualifications of Acts i. 21, 22? To quote the words of another "To suppose that Paul was the intended twelfth, is rather to lower his true position and extraordinary call".

Needless to say, I heartily endorse the need for patient waiting upon God to learn His will, which the writer of the article in question was pressing upon readers.

Yours affectionately in our Lord Jesus,

THOS. WILSON

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

BY THE TIME this issue of *Words of Help* is distributed, the summer holiday season will be here and many of our readers will be going away for a week or two. Best wishes are offered to all for health and prosperity of body and mind. May such find also in personal communion, or in fellowship with other Christians not perhaps often met in the usual way, real refreshment of spirit.

On one occasion the Lord invited His disciples to come apart and rest awhile because so many were coming and going that they had no leisure even to eat (Mark vi. 30-44). Nevertheless, before the day was over, those same disciples were bidden to supply the needs of a hungry multitude. It must have been tiring for them to walk up and down the ranks seated on the grass carrying the baskets containing the Lord's provision. We may be sure however all necessary strength was given for the task. It will be so also for the Christian who finds an opportunity to serve the same Lord even when on a much-needed holiday.

In the wilderness days (Exodus xvi.) the manna was given each day, except, of course, on the sabbath, and we never read of holidays on which the people were relieved of the need to gather their daily supply of food. Those indeed who attempted to lay up a store (ver. 19-21) incurred Moses' anger. Each day brought its own needs, and a commensurate supply of manna. Let not therefore the soul be neglected while the body is receiving holiday refreshment.

In recent years Christian house parties and holiday camps have been arranged, at which morning prayers and an evening hour for Bible talks and conversation have ensured that the spiritual needs of those attending are not overlooked. May the Lord's blessing be upon all such efforts in His Name! If any of our young readers, especially those from homes where family worship is unknown, would like to be put in touch with one of these, a postcard to the Editor will secure an introduction.

SOME SCRIPTURAL REASONS WHY CHRIST MUST RETURN

Read: Zechariah XIV. 1-14

(Notes of an address given at Wildfell Hall, Catford, 2/11/57)

MY purpose this evening is to give some simple reasons from the Scriptures, suitable for the youngest believer who perhaps knows little of prophetic truth, why Christ must return. I say *some* reasons, because there are of course many others.

1. THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECIES REFERRING TO OUR LORD'S INCARNATION DEMAND THAT HE SHOULD RETURN.

In Isaiah ix. 6-7, we read "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God. The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this". Well! the Son has been given (John iii. 16); but has the government, i.e. the government of this world, ever been upon His shoulder? He has as yet no throne in this world. He sits upon His Father's throne in heaven since the throne in Jerusalem was refused Him.

Today the world is organised by Satan. Politically, socially and religiously it is under the devil's control, except of course where men and women are born of God and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Has the world yet had peace without end? When the government is upon His shoulder — note the singular "shoulder"; it is a light task for Him to rule the world!—it will have. Christ came here to reign (John xviii. 37). But the King was murdered; so everything is postponed. God's purposes however will not fail; all the prophetic scriptures speaking of Christ will be fulfilled. He came of David's line, and He is going to honour David's throne by sitting upon it as King of Kings and Lord of lords.

“The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this”. Has God zeal? Yes! On whose behalf? His own beloved Son’s. God is not unmindful of the suffering and humiliation of His Son when He came here the first time. Afflicted and ready to die from His youth up, fourteen attempts were made on His life. How delighted we should be to think that He is going to be admired and worshipped.

II. HIS HUMILIATION AND REJECTION DEMAND THAT HE SHOULD COME BACK.

Such was the contempt of the Jewish people for the beloved Son of God that they said “We will not have *this* (“man” should be omitted) to reign over us”. They cried “Crucify Him, crucify Him”. And the Son of God was hanged on a cross and put to a shameful death.

Are Christ’s murderers going to triumph then? Is the Lamb of God to be defeated? Impossible. Listen to His own story of a certain nobleman—Himself (and what a noble Man He was!)—who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom (Luke xix. 12 etc.). Christ has not gone to fight for His kingdom, or to win it; nor to receive it from the hands of Satan as Satan had once hoped might happen (read Matthew iv. 8-10). What might and audacity Satan displayed when he suggested that the Son of God should fall down and worship him, promising to give Him the kingdoms of the world if He would do so! And you will observe that the Lord did not dispute that they were within Satan’s power to give. But Christ will receive the kingdom from His Father.

The second coming of Christ is really very simple truth; yet so many do not believe it. Three quarters of the Bible, and nearly two thousand prophecies, are taken up with His coming, in one way or another. It seems to me that the god of this world must have the power to blind the minds even of Christians in regard to certain truths, of which this is certainly one.

Consequent upon His rejection here as man, He was received up into glory, and the Spirit of God came down to convict the world of righteousness, because God has received the Man they thought was not fit to live. The rulers said, the

righteous government of this land demands that Jesus should die a felon's death. God said, "I will show you Who is righteous"; and forthwith He raised Christ up to sit upon His own right hand.

Of course, the Lord Jesus never ceased to be God. But after having finished the work of atonement on the cross, He ascended to heaven, and there, *as a Man*, He seated Himself down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 3). As He entered heaven, God greeted Him with the words, "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (ver. 13). Again, God said, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8).

III. HIS PROMISED GLORY AS SON OF MAN MAKES HIS RETURN IMPERATIVE.

He must return. Zechariah says His feet—nothing allegorical about this—those same beloved feet that trod the streets of Nazareth and Bethlehem, shall stand upon the mount of Olives. It is an interesting fact that every morning before breakfast a small company of Jews may be observed arriving at the Mount of Olives to see whether He has come! Poor souls, they are going to be deceived and receive one who will come in his own name—the antichrist (John v. 43).

When the Son of the Highest came the first time, God sent a number of angels down to give Him the welcome He failed to receive from mankind. When He comes again in His glory, *all* the holy angels will be with Him (Matt. xxv. 31). What a sight! There are millions of angels (see Rev. v. 11). Yet the whole of heaven will be assembled to accompany the Christ when He returns in dazzling glory that will blind the eyes of the world. His saints, of course, will follow Him, included in the armies of heaven (Rev. xix. 14).

If you want to know what His glory will be like, read the story of the transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1-9). For most of His life He hid His glory, but on the mount, in the darkness of the night, His clothing was lit up. Was it the glory of His Father? No. Was it the glory of heaven? No. It was His own glory which lit up the whole scene. So it will be when He comes.

And we shall be glorified like Him. There will be no sun, moon or stars in the millennium or in eternity. The Lord Himself will be the light of both heaven and earth (Rev. xxi. 23).

We read in Matt. xxvii. 30, that they spat upon the Son of God—or, as it may be rendered, they kept spitting upon Him. Blessed be God the same One is to reign and have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. God has promised that ultimately He is to be “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lords of lords” (I Tim. vi. 15). All nations shall serve Him. How wonderful all this is!

IV. THEN THERE ARE REASONS IN CONNECTION WITH HIS CHURCH WHICH MAKE IT NECESSARY THAT HE SHOULD RETURN.

The Church is Christ's body—we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. Christ, the glorious Head of the body, is at present in heaven; the members, or many of them—are still on earth. Are the Head and members always to be separated thus? The church is being built up and nourished “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. iv. 13). That means that Christ the Head and we the members will become one new man. And to effect this completion of the body, the Lord is personally to “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . . so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. iv. 16, 17). Is it not clear then that Christ must return? The fact that this is preached so little today may be because the devil is active to conceal the truth lest men and women should be converted. And if that is so, then surely Christ's coming must be very near.

V. THEN THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB MUST TAKE PLACE.

The church is also the bride of Christ. The heavenly Bridegroom is still in His Father's house waiting for the nuptial day. Is the marriage never to take place? Is the church always to be the bride elect? If that would satisfy believers, it would not satisfy Christ. Nothing will satisfy Him short of having those whom He loves with Him, and united to Him for ever.

Then is the bride to fetch the Bridegroom? That would be

a strange thing—out of place probably in any country! No, the Bridegroom is coming for the bride, and will take her to the Father's house, where, after passing the judgment seat of Christ for each believer to have his life and work for the Lord since he became a Christian reviewed, the marriage will take place, the bride having prepared her garments, a metaphorical reference to the righteous acts of believers of which God has approved.

Even while this address is in progress the cry is going out all over the world "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. xxv. 6). At one time this cry was limited to a certain section of the church of God. Now it is to be heard everywhere. Christ is returning.

VI. THEN AGAIN, A HOME IS BEING MADE READY FOR THE BRIDE.

Our Lord told His disciples "In My Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). Is that house of untold grandeur never to be occupied? Is there to be a house to let in heaven? Has our beloved Lord been so long preparing a place for nobody?

It is sometimes said that Christ prepared it at the cross. He Himself said that He was going to heaven to prepare it. What a place it will be! There are many families in heaven, but Christ is preparing a special place, as we may well imagine He would, for His bride; and we, the church, are the bride of Christ.

Oh, day of wondrous promise,
The Bridegroom and the Bride
Are seen in glory ever—
All hearts then satisfied!

Nothing is more certain than that Christ must return according to this promise in John xiv. So "Let not your heart be troubled".

VII. LASTLY CHRIST'S COMING OUT OF HEAVEN WILL BE WITH ALL HIS PEOPLE.

Note the word "with" all His saints in Zech. xiv. 5. Not *for* His saints, but *with* them. Paul speaks of "the coming of our

Lord Jesus Christ *with all His saints*" (I Thess. iii. 13). Jude tells us that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, preached the second coming of Christ, saying "Behold, the Lord cometh *with ten thousands of His saints*" (ver. 14).

Now I emphasize these passages that speak of His coming *with all His saints*, because there is a certain doctrine being promulgated that there will be two parts to the rapture: the *watching* ones to be taken first, and the others left to go through the great tribulation. Scripture denies this categorically and emphatically (I Cor. xv. 23 & 51; and I Thess. iv. 16, 17). Christ is coming back with *all His saints*, and those in their graves who are His are to be raised for that coming.

But if Christ is coming out of heaven *with His people*, how are they going to get to heaven beforehand so as to be able to come out again with Him, unless Christ comes first to take them to heaven? That is the "mystery", a secret now revealed by God, of which we read in I Thess. iv. "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord". Paul prays for his converts that "your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto (or, "at") the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ", because only by this coming will our bodies of humiliation be fashioned like unto His own glorious body (Phil. iii. 21).

When He comes, *these* existing bodies of ours are to be changed. We read four times in I Cor. xv. "It is sown . . . it is raised". What wonderful bodies we are going to have — "fashioned like unto His glorious body"! All the millions of bodies of Christ's own will be raised and changed without a grave being disturbed. Who could do it but Himself? And He *shall* do it. But He must come out of heaven to do it. This will take place when He returns.

The Thessalonians were under a misapprehension that their loved ones who had died would miss the glorious appearing of Christ. But Paul assures them that when Christ comes back with His people to reign "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring *with Him*" (I Thess. iv. 14). For they will have been

raptured, or caught up, by the Lord Himself, and their bodies changed in preparation for the occasion. Oh! wonderful day!

Thanks be to God, Christ must come again. "He must reign" (I Cor. xv. 25). Events around us in the world today point to His near return. Soon millions will be crying out "Hallelujah! Christ has come!"

At last the Prince of life has come!

The sleepers have awoken;

The living have been changed;

The church is glorified.

Death has at last been slain

And the grave spoiled for ever.

At last, Amen.

Even so, come Lord Jesus.

How will His coming affect our readers personally? If saved, you will be caught up to be for ever with the Lord: if unsaved, the only Scriptures in the word of God which refer to this solemn matter make it perfectly clear there is no hope for those who have rejected Christ; they will have no further opportunity of believing the gospel preached today, nor the gospel of the kingdom, nor will they find any way of entering into heaven. May all our readers be certain that they belong to Christ, and thus be ready for His coming! JOHN WESTON

THE CHRISTIAN WALK IN THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

THE Christian who in any measure lives up to his privileges according to New Testament teaching is a somewhat remarkable person. One effect upon him of his blessings in Christ is that, according to the Ephesian epistle, he has to be seated (Ch. ii. 6), to stand (vi. 13), to kneel (iii. 14 and vi. 18) and to walk, all at the same time, while elsewhere he is expected to be always running (Heb. xii. 1)!

We are now thinking of the Christian's "walk", and by this we are no doubt to understand his habitual behaviour and manner of life, the whole round of his regular activities. In ordinary things we speak for example of people of every "walk" of life, that is, of every occupation. Seven times the

word is used in this epistle, once of unbelievers, once of the Christian before conversion, and five times of the Christian's life in this world.

The first place is at the beginning of chapter ii. "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked". That is to say, that before his conversion the Christian was no different from or better than anyone else. He regularly practised the things which are contrary to God, and offensive to Him, and so he was lost to God, "dead" as far as spiritual things are concerned, without even a spark of real life towards God. He was governed by the lusts of his fallen nature, and merited only wrath. So his conversion and blessing are entirely undeserved and wholly of God. Thanks be to Him!

The second place is chapter ii, verse 10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them". God in His mercy and love and grace and kindness is pleased to work in dead souls, imparting to them a new life and nature, taking them morally and spiritually out of the flesh and putting them in Christ before Him, and this makes them very different persons even in this life. Instead of walking in trespasses and sins, the Christian walks in good works in obedience to God Who has already ordained or prepared them. So the believer does what is good not to merit and gain life, but because he has been created anew by God and so has life in Christ.

The third mention of walk is in chapter iv, verse 1: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called". That is to say, all the blessed teaching of Chapters i, ii and iii, is to have a practical effect on our lives in this world. The believer is saved from his sins and the consequences of them, and is also brought to God. He has access to the Father. He is a member of the body of Christ, and belongs to the church which is the dwelling place of God on earth. His future is heavenly glory. Such is his wonderful vocation or calling, that God has called him to out of this world. We should look up constantly for grace to walk worthily of it.

The fourth reference to walk is a wholesome warning, Chapter iv. verse 17. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind". Not of the world, the Christian while in it can so easily be affected by all he sees and hears on every hand. And what evil things they are that thrust themselves constantly upon him! We are prone to imitate the habits of those about us. The Spirit is emphatic here that we are not to imitate them, following this with the exhortation of chapter v., verse 1, that we should be followers or imitators (mimeetai in the Greek) of God as His dear children. Perhaps Bunyan had this in mind when writing of Christian and Faithful in Vanity Fair where the "men of this world" who kept the fair "wondered at their apparel, so they did likewise at their speech, for few could understand what they said. They naturally spoke the language of Canaan".

The fifth and sixth places where our word is found are in chapter v. Verse 2 says "Walk in love", and verse 8 "Walk as children of light". God Himself *is* love and *is* light. Such is His nature, what He is. And Christians are to show out this blessed nature of God upon earth in their own walk or quality of life. How can we do this except as we learn to allow Christ Who lives in us to show out His life through us? He loved, and proved His love, verse 2. And He lived here in all goodness and righteousness and truth, verse 9, where it should read "the fruit of the light", not "Spirit". So, as our hearts get to know Him and His power, our walk will correspond. Our love will be real, the love of Christ flowing through us to others. And delighting in Him we shall be happy in what is holy, and be quick to avoid all that is contrary to God.

The seventh and last time that we read of "walk" in this epistle is in chapter v., verse 15: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise". The word translated "circumspectly" means literally "accurately", and signifies the correctness which comes of carefulness. This demands wakefulness and watchfulness. The verse before, verse 14, says "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light". A sleepy person will walk un-

certainly in a blundering way, as though in the dark, but the Christian is to be awake and alive and alert, intelligent about the Lord's will for him in this world. He is to be careful how he goes along day by day. Each footstep is to be firm in just the right place. He is to be no simpleton, but wise and under control, braced for the path, with a clear sense of divine direction and purpose in life. Walk circumspectly.

John the Baptist had the priceless privilege of looking upon Jesus as He walked. We can by faith, and the Spirit's help, do the same. Is this how we read the four Gospels? As we watch Jesus walking here below, let us remember that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps, and that he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked (I Peter ii. 21; I John ii. 6). This does not mean of course that we can imitate divine power and authority. But our lives ought to have the same moral features of obedience to God and dependence on Him, meekness, lowliness of heart, love, patience, purity, the absence of self-seeking, and the other beautiful graces which so abounded in the Lord here.

W. H. L. GRAHAM

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XXVIII-XXX

GOD'S dealings with Jacob may be summed up as grace, guidance and government. The history of Jacob shows the personal operation of these things in human life, and the finished product, for:

1. The supplanter becomes Israel, the prince of God;
2. The defaulter becomes the blesser of his own seed and of Pharaoh, the world-monarch;
3. The man of faith dies in full assurance of promised blessing.

God appears to Jacob on five occasions:

1. At Bethel—in pure grace, with the knowledge of God (xxviii);
2. At Padan-aram—in guidance and government, with a promise (xxxi);

3. At Jabbok, Peniel, Penuel—in grace and government, with self-knowledge (xxxii);
4. At Shechem—in guidance and government (xxxv);
5. At Bethel—in grace, and with further revelation of Himself as El-Shaddai, the all-sufficient One (xxxv).

Later on God spoke to him at Beersheba in the visions of the night (xlvi. 1-4).

xxviii. 1-5. With Isaac's blessing, and a strict charge not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, Jacob sets out from home. Never again did he see Rebekah, whose favourite son he was, and who instigated the atrocious fraud upon Esau which made his flight an urgent necessity. They both had to reap as they had sown.

Verses 6-9. Esau takes a third wife of the daughters of Ishmael, in imitation of Jacob. How often when God works does Satan seek to imitate (Acts xix. 13-17).

Verses 10-22. An exquisite picture of the grace of God. A wanderer, self-exiled from his father's house by his own wrong-doing, lonely, friendless, a prey to dread of a just wrath, guilty of almost incredible meanness and deceit, presenting no single attractive feature of his character, Jacob becomes the subject of the grace of God. Neither by birth nor by character was he qualified for blessing. Yet God reveals Himself as near and a Blessor. There is nothing more wonderful than God's grace to the unworthy. By the sovereign grace of God men are saved now (Eph. ii. 8; Titus ii. 11-13).

In a dream a ladder—or, more strictly, something stepped, suggested possibly by the physical condition of the country in that part—is presented to Jacob's gaze, crowded with the activity of God's messengers. The angels, it may be, ascended with the tale of human need, and descended with the grace of God to meet it.

A blessing, full, free, and unconditional, is assured to him, based upon the purpose and promise of God. It exactly suited Jacob's need, for being:

1. Alone—he sees the angels of God near him (cf. Heb. i. 14);
2. Friendless—God says "I am with thee";

3. Uncertain as to the future—"I will keep thee";
4. Feeling the separation from his father's house — "I will bring thee again into this land";
5. Experiencing the sad consequences of his own mistakes, a time when the heart is ready to doubt God's grace— God says, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of".

The permanence of the blessing is assured by the character of God; to which reference is made in Malachi iii. 6.

How little Jacob knew of God is apparent because the thought of God's presence terrified him. He knew not that perfect love which casts out fear (I John iv. 18).

Faith, the decisive factor in his life, was, however, working, though but feebly, for in His vow to God, Jacob slips in a characteristic clause about food and raiment. It is easier to trust God for eternal blessings than for temporal daily needs.

Conscious of God's grace to him, Jacob seems to feel that something must be given to God in return, if only a tithe.

Bethel marks the beginning of Jacob's spiritual life. On his deathbed he refers to what happened here as being the most important thing in his eventful life (xlvi. 3). It was his first experience of God's grace. Later in the same chapter, comprehensively and concisely, yet with great discrimination, he says: "God, before Whom *my fathers* Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil," etc.—testifying thus to the guidance and government of God.

At the close of his life Paul remembers the exceeding abundant grace of the Lord, and the mercy shown him at his conversion (I Timothy i. 12-16).

xxix. and xxx. Abraham's and Isaac's wanderings were *inside* the land of promise; Jacob's outside. In this Jacob typifies Israel at present, away from their land, scattered amongst the Gentiles. Officially set aside as God's people, they are, however, the objects of His providential care, and, like Jacob, will be restored in a future day.

Unlike Joseph, who is a type of Christ throughout his life, Jacob typifies Christ only in the circumstances of his marriage.

Jacob loved Rachel, who represents the Jews, but he got Leah first. So now, the Gentiles are being blessed, not the Jews exclusively (Rom. xi. 11, etc.).

Neither tent nor altar appears in Padan-aram. There is little to choose between Jacob and Laban. Each endeavours to outwit the other in craftiness. How sad when the behaviour of the child of God is indistinguishable from that of the worldly man!

In His governmental dealings, God chastened His servant by the bitter experiences of Padan-aram. Yet Laban is obliged to admit that God has not forsaken Jacob (xxx. 27). As in the cases of Abraham (xii. and xx.) and Isaac (xxvi.), God never disowns before the world, nor forsakes, the one who has true faith, however severely He may, governmentally, cause that one to suffer for his misdeeds.

Jacob married both wives at the close of the first period of seven years' service. The week (xxix. 27) is the customary week of the marriage festivities. Jacob therefore married Rachel one week after Leah, though he had to serve Laban another seven years for her.

Laban's cruel trick—cruel both for Jacob and Leah—led to unhappiness in the family life, revealed by the names given to Leah's and the maidservants' sons. Could there be a better example than Jacob's family history of the sad consequences of setting aside God's appointed order that a man should have only one wife? Several in the book of Genesis are deceived, but none so cruelly as Jacob, and then by his own sons. Deceit was evidently a family weakness.

The trick played by Jacob with regard to the flocks (xxx. 37-42), though not a breach of the terms of the bargain with Laban, was unworthy of one who believed in God, but without doubt there were very definite results to Jacob's action. Jacob himself attributed the result to God (xxx. 8-9).

From what he says in the next chapter (verses 36-42), Jacob had evidently suffered much harsh and unfair treatment at Laban's hands. Nevertheless, God blessed Jacob (xxx. 43), so that he returned to Canaan with a very large host.

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

This month we are pleased to commend to the attention of our readers a small Booklet entitled "Intelligent Worship and Service", recently issued for sale by the Publisher of WORDS OF HELP (1s. 2d., post paid.)

We have a special interest in this particular booklet, inasmuch as its contents are largely the reproduction of a series of articles which appeared in WORDS OF HELP during 1956/7. Moreover, the author, Mr. J. C. Kell of Tunbridge Wells, has been a regular contributor to our pages for many years.

Delighting as the believer must in the love of Christ to himself individually, it is possible to overlook His special affection for the Church for whom He gave Himself. Yet these two wonderful themes are brought together in the parables of Matthew xiii. 44-46. The treasure hid in a field, to obtain which the finder was prepared to sell all he possessed, doubtless refers to believers as individuals (*c.f.*, Malachi iii. 16-17). But in the parable which follows there is but "one pearl of great price"; *one* single object for which the merchant man with his discerning eye gave all that he had in order to possess it for himself. Is this not a reference to the Church for which Christ gave Himself "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27)?

Mr. Kell's purpose in drawing attention to this important subject is expressed in the closing words of the booklet: "That the Christian reader may find in the study of the subject food for the soul, encouragement for the path, enlargement of understanding of the glories of Christ and of the purposes of God, increased zeal for soul-winning, increased love for all saints, a better understanding how to put into practice his relationship with all other Christians, and incentive to greater circumspection in his conduct, and, above all, enrichment of his praise and worship.

THE FOUR OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF JOHN XIX

A characteristic of the Gospel of John is the presentation of Jesus, the Son of God, to the world at large. It is in this way a contrast with the Gospel of Matthew which presents Him as the promised Messiah to the Jewish nation. Verses typical of this feature of John are "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of *the world*" (i. 29); "God so loved *the world*" etc. (iii. 16); "My flesh too, which I will give for the life of *the world*" (vi. 51). Yet it is important to notice that in this gospel there are numerous quotations and references to the Old Testament, such as Ch. v. 39, 46, 47, and many others. The epistle to the Romans similarly contains numbers of quotations from the Old Testament. One lesson to be learnt from this is that familiarity with the Old Testament is of great importance to Gentile as well as to Jewish Christians.

There are four prophecies specifically referred to in John xix. as applicable to the Lord Jesus while He was on the cross. *The first* is "They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots" (Psa. xxii. 18). It has been well said that the first half of this Psalm speaks of the sufferings of the Lord under the hand of God on man's account. The first verse foretells the very words of the Lord so solemnly uttered "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" A view the writer has recently seen expressed is that Jesus was using this Old Testament scripture to express His feelings. But the quotation from the Psalm in John xix. 24 is preceded by the words "That the scripture might be *fulfilled*." It was not a case of the Lord using the Psalmist's words, but of the Holy Spirit, through the Psalmist, foretelling the experiences and sufferings of the Lord on the Cross. There is thus the authority of the Holy Spirit, through the apostle, for applying the first part of Psalm xxii. to the Lord Jesus on the Cross. The second part of the Psalm foretells the wonderful results in praise and worship, which are not yet fully manifested—the "Captain of our salvation" was made perfect through sufferings, and it is of Him that the Psalmist said prophetically "I will

declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. ii. 10-12; Psalm xxii. 22).

The words quoted in John xix. 24 show the callous indifference of the soldiers to the sufferings of Jesus. Is not this indifference found in the world today? Personal gain and the excitement of a gamble occupied their minds. How prominent these things are in the 20th Century, even (as it were) in the very presence of the Cross! They are found in association with the profession of christianity, as well as among those who make no such profession. Does it never happen that young christians (perhaps older ones, too) are caught in the chain of snares beginning with "lucky dips" and raffles, and leading on to football pools, premium bonds etc.? Such things direct the mind from Christ and drug the soul.

"These things *therefore* the soldiers did." How inevitable is the fulfilment of the prophetic word! The soldiers had no idea they were acting exactly as had been foretold centuries before. It is a very solemn fact to contemplate that all the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments which have not yet been fulfilled will come to pass in due time. Man cannot alter this though he may unwittingly bring the events about. For the redeemed the certainty is linked with eternal blessing; for the unbeliever with eternal judgment. All fulfilment will be for the glory of God and of Christ. May every reader be able, with the writer, to look forward with sober joy to the consummation of all prophecy!

The *second* scripture referred to is "They gave me also gall for my meat: and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psa. lxi. 21). In His extremity the Lord Jesus, the sin-bearer, the holy suffering Lamb of God—that this scripture might be fulfilled—said "I thirst" (John xix. 28). Here was no unwitting fulfilment of prophecy as in the previous case, but perfect conformity with the mind of the Holy Spirit expressed in the Psalm. How the perfection of the Son of God shines forth in this incident! He had come to do His Father's

will. "All things were now accomplished," but there was this one prophecy outstanding, and He initiated the action for its fulfilment.

The quotation makes it clear that Psalm lxix. refers to the Cross, in fact largely to the sufferings of Christ at the hands of men for His faithfulness to God. "For Thy sake I have borne reproach" (ver. 7) gives the key-note, and verse 21 is the last mocking action of man before He died. As previously stated, the inevitableness of the fulfilment of prophecy is clear, and it is very solemn to contrast the latter part of Psalm lxix. with that of Psalm xxii. Christ's sufferings at the hands of men call, in the first place, for retribution, whereas His sufferings at the hand of God open the way for universal praise and worship. Retribution on the wicked is as inevitable as the blessings of the last half of Psalm xxii., and the last few verses of Psalm lxix.

These two Old Testament prophecies are both connected with the sacrificial sufferings of the dying Son of God. We do well to "gaze on that great grief." The forsaking of God, and the agony of divine judgment borne by the Son of God when He was made sin for us; the cruelty, taunts and callous indifference of those who represented the human race, endured by the One who had so perfectly glorified God and had shown such grace, compassion and love to man, and was laying down His life in supreme and perfect sacrifice in order that men might be righteously pardoned, justified and blessed—the depth of these sufferings is far beyond our capacity to grasp. We may well exclaim:

Holy Lord, we think of Thee,
Of Thy woe and agony,
Of Thy sufferings on the tree:
Saviour, we adore Thee.

The *third* Old Testament passage cited, "A bone of Him shall not be broken" (John xix. 36), links the death of Christ with the type of the Passover Lamb (Exodus xii. 46). Here we are reminded of the substitutionary aspect of Christ's death. In Egypt the lamb was killed, the blood sprinkled to meet Jehovah's eye, the body roast with fire and eaten by the

people, with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. This was their shelter from judgment, the basis of their deliverance from bondage, the start of a new era and of their journey from Egypt to the land of promise. The lamb had been the substitute for each family before God, and each individual had evidenced faith in this fact by eating. Subsequent annual passover feasts were commemorative. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (I Cor. v. 7). We were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1. 19). The substitutionary work of Christ on the cross is essential to our redemption, and each individual must appropriate it for himself by faith for his salvation. So-called "christian" teaching which omits this, whatever other truths it includes, is no basis of salvation from eternal judgment. It is interesting that, in the gospel of John the actual death of the Lord is linked with the passover, whereas in the other three gospels it is the commemorative act of the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup that is substituted by the Lord Himself for the commemorative celebration of the passover. There is much instruction to be gathered from the Old Testament in this connection.

In John xix. 36 there is also a reference to Psalm xxxiv. 19, 20. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." In verses 15-18 of the Psalm "the righteous" is plural and the pronouns are "their" and "them," but in verses 19 and 20 it is singular, uniquely and specially referring to the Lord Jesus. Although He was suffering under the holy hand of God, and although He was scorned, mocked, and given a malefactor's death by man, the Lord's intrinsic righteousness must be confirmed by the fulfilment of this scripture.

The *fourth* scripture quoted (John xix. 37), "They shall look on Him whom they pierced" (Zech. xii. 10) implied the Lord's resurrection and looked forward to His manifestation on this earth in power and glory. The quotation draws attention to the beautiful series of events which will characterize "that day" (Zech. xii. to xiv.), when "His feet shall stand

upon the mount of Olives," "the Lord shall be King over all the earth," "every one that is left of all the nations . . . shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts," and "there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." It is clear that the fulfilment of this prophecy is still future, unlike the three previously considered. The apostle John, long after the Lord's ascension, wrote "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him" (Rev. i. 7). When the implications of the first three prophecies cited in John xix. are grasped by faith, although only partly understood, what a joy it is to look on, and to realise that "He must reign" (see "WORDS OF HELP," March, 1958). Do we not "love His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8) and look forward to "the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13)?

The number "four" in the Scriptures is used in connection with what is of universal application, what is comprehensive, e.g. "the four winds," "the four corners of the earth" etc., and indirectly "from the east, and from the west, from the north and from the south" (Psalm cvii. 3), the four gospels etc. These four prophecies in John xix. form a comprehensive unity in connection with the death of the Son of God when taken in their Old Testament setting. His sufferings under the holy judgment of God, and at the hands of men, the substitutionary character of His death, His personal intrinsic righteousness, His resurrection and future manifestation, are all facts essential to a right appreciation of the Cross. Moreover the repetition of the phrase "that the Scripture might (or should) be fulfilled" points to the fulfilment of all prophecy in the Old and New Testaments in God's due time. Meanwhile we are to be looking for and expecting the fulfilment of such New Testament prophecies as "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John xiv. 3) and "we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. iv. 17).

But all the foregoing will have been written in vain if consideration of these four prophecies has failed to occupy the reader's heart with the Person of the Son of God who was

upon the Cross. "All things were made by Him." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He had power to lay down His life and power to take it again. He could say "I and My Father are one." He had glorified the Father here on earth, and on the Cross, where these four prophecies had their application. He finished the work the Father had given Him to do. Now He is seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, awaiting the moment when He shall come in the air for His own, and then to reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. How worthy is He of our homage and praise, worthy to be adored by all!

J. C. Kell.

SILVER AND GOLD

IT will be readily acknowledged that much of the teaching of God's word is conveyed to us by types and shadows, and also by the use of metaphors. This is surely a great help, and we shall find profit in understanding the spiritual meaning underlying these things. Among them silver and gold have a large place, but there is of course that which is natural and that which is spiritual.

God's instructions to Moses concerning the Tabernacle called for the use of both silver and gold. Comparing Exodus xxx. 11-16 with chapter xxxviii. 25 and on, it will be gathered that silver is typical of redemption (atonement money). This formed the foundation (sockets) on which the boards of the Tabernacle were erected. Gold too has a very large place in both the structure and furniture etc., this surely being typical of divine righteousness, i.e. God's righteousness founded upon the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus, which is so blessedly taught in Rom. iii. 21-26. Thus we learn that if God saves sinners, He does it in divine righteousness founded upon the work of our Lord Jesus and the precious blood shed upon the cross of Calvary.

In passing it may be remarked that the instructions given for the Tabernacle appear to make a distinction between "gold" and "pure gold," the latter probably signifying deity.

For example, when the ark is considered as a type of the Lord Jesus personally, the shittim wood used in its manufacture undoubtedly typifies His true manhood; correspondingly the "pure gold" with which the wood was overlaid would express His essential godhead.

However, the Tabernacle types are so full and rich that secondary interpretations must be expected. In connection with this particular symbol one has written: "You have the blood put upon the ark or mercy seat. The mercy seat is of pure gold. There you see what is absolutely divine. You see something as to man when the law is put in the ark, because that applies to man and shittim wood too is in the ark; but the covering is divine righteousness absolutely" (Coll. Wtgs. Vol. xix. p. 277).

Gold is mentioned at the beginning and again at the end of the scriptures. As early as Genesis ii. 11-12 we read of it in connection with the garden of Eden, one stream from which "compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good." This was before the entry of sin into the world. The last mention is in Revelation xxi. 21, "And the street of the city was pure gold."

Earthly blessings were characteristic of the saints in Old Testament days. Genesis xiii. 2 records that Abram was very rich in silver and gold. Again in chapter xxiv. 35 it is said that the Lord had given him silver and gold. In contrast with this, at the beginning of the new era of grace, we read that Peter said to the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts iii. 6).

What a warning note is sounded in I Timothy vi. 9, 10? "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many unwise and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is the root of every evil" (N.T.). Paul, who wrote this, could declare to the Ephesian elders at Miletus "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold" (Acts xx. 33).

As to the spiritual teaching in which gold is used as a figure, we have solemn words of warning spoken by the Lord to the Laodiceans: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire (i.e. true and approved righteousness) that thou mayest be rich" etc. (Rev. iii. 17, 18).

As to that which may be built on the true foundation, we are told that the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Six sorts of material are given "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," and we do know which of these will stand the fire (I Cor. iii. 12-15). May both writer and reader have grace to receive these solemn words of holy admonition, to take heed how we build.

Of the corrupt church (Babylon), a list is given in Rev. xviii. 12, 13, of those things which were her merchandise. At the head of the list is gold, at the bottom, bodies (see margin) and souls of men.

These are but fragmentary remarks on a very large subject, and further research will be found fruitful in blessing to the soul, bearing in mind that "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." (Proverbs iii. 13, 14; see also Chap. viii. 10 and 19).

It is good always to have the eye and heart directed to the Lord Jesus, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. i. 30, 31).

T. WILSON

GRACE ABOUNDING

Read: 2 Samuel v. 4-10; Matthew xxi. 14

FEW readers of the above mentioned verses in the book of Samuel will not be startled by the remark in verse 8 that the lame and the blind at Jerusalem were "hated of David's

soul." Indeed the writer has known David summarily condemned for what is alleged to be a fault in his character, namely that he was callous, and even cruel, in his attitude towards afflicted persons, as though no other construction of these admittedly difficult words was possible.

Were the defence of David the main purpose of this article, many other incidents in his life, as well as his writings, might be adduced to show the inconsistency of the indictment with what is recorded of him elsewhere. It will be remembered that when David was encamped in the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel xxii.), there came to him a large number of "unfortunates," persons who were discontented, distressed or in debt. So far from despising them, David welcomed them, cared for them and organised them into a band of warriors of which both he and they came to be justly proud. Furthermore he showed the kindness of God to Mephibosheth, maintaining at his own royal table an unsightly cripple (2 Samuel ix.). In view of such conduct, is it seriously suggested that David harboured feelings of antipathy to lame and blind folk on account of disabilities for which they were probably in no way to blame? Can we believe any such thing of the sweet psalmist who gave us the 23rd and 103rd Psalms, as well as many another? Should we not in fairness seek some explanation more consistent with the general tenor of what is recorded concerning one whom God acknowledged as "My servant" (Psa. lxxxix. 20)—"a man after Mine own heart (Acts xiii. 22)?

King David had been reigning in Hebron, and the time had come for him to establish his throne in Jerusalem, the place chosen of God (see 2 Chron. vi. 6). He therefore went there with divine authority to drive out the Jebusite occupants. His action was in no way capricious, but deliberate in fulfilment of the will of God.

Now it is clear that the Jebusites were determined to refuse David admission. Evidently they had been warned of his approach and purpose. Possibly they had been given an opportunity to surrender. Whether however the suggestion of the Jebusites in verse 6 indicated a scornful view of David's ability to wrest from them a stronghold so impregnable that

that they were confident a mere handful of lame and blind folk would be adequate for its defence, or whether they actually planned to obstruct David's entry by physically thrusting forward into the approach a company of cripples with the intention that their pitiable condition should excite David's compassion sufficiently to deter him from his purpose, readers must judge for themselves. It could be that the Jebusites were aware of David's tenderness of heart, and that they shrewdly selected a method of defence calculated to break his resolve.

Whichever view is taken however, there was behind the manoeuvre a stark challenge to the will of God. Was the king after God's heart to be denied his throne? Was God's choice of Jerusalem to be the capital of David's kingdom to be countermanded? Was sympathy of a human kind to be indulged to frustrate the working out of God's purpose? Not for a moment so far as David was concerned. So that if the lame and the blind, not to mention those who made such cruel use of them, acted in defiance of the divine will, then David would "hate," and if need be destroy them. David's predecessor, Saul, had failed in this very thing when from motives of compassion he spared those whom God had ordered to be utterly destroyed (see I Samuel xv.). David realised that his first duty was to obey God, and God himself had ordained that the Jebusites should be destroyed (Deut. vii. 2).

This is a side of the truth too often overlooked. Whilst rejoicing in the superabounding grace of God, and His mercy to the stubborn and undeserving, it is a solemn fact that no one who opposes God's decree that "all men should honour the Son" (John v. 23) will be able to rely upon the compassion of God to save him in the day of judgment if he has failed to obey the divine decree. Truly God's compassions fail not in this present day of grace, as every believing heart can testify, but His holiness and justice will condemn unsparingly, as well as righteously, in the day of judgment. No considerations of pity will deliver from punishment those who withstand God's purpose for the glory of His Son.

It is right indeed, therefore, that those who preach the gospel should warn men of the terrors of God's judgment (Heb. x. 31; xii. 29), whilst proclaiming with delight and earnestness the abundant mercy that is extended now to all who repent.

But whilst this is a wholesome side of the truth to bear in mind, it still remains true that the day in which we live *is* characterised by the grace and long-suffering of God. In the parable of the tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30), which undoubtedly includes in its scope the present dispensation, the Lord answers the question of the servants to the householder whether they should root up the tares from amongst the wheat, by saying: "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." Judgment on the wicked is to be suspended until the righteous are out of harm's way: care for the safety of the righteous takes precedence over the execution of God's judgment upon the wicked.

Precisely the same lesson was taught when the inhabitants of a village of the Samaritans denied the Lord a suitable reception. James and John enquired in the heat of their indignation whether they should command fire to come down from heaven to consume those guilty of such insolence. How memorable the Lord's ruling was in the matter: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke ix. 51-56).

From 2 Peter iii. 9 we learn that the longsuffering of God is an outstanding feature of the christian era, and that this will continue until the Lord comes. We have the Holy Spirit's assurance 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."

Now it was this self-same grace that was manifested by our Lord towards the lame and the blind who came to Him in the temple. How significantly we read that "He healed them." Truly the Son of Man was come to seek and to save that which was lost.

What a contrast this is to the action of David in 2 Samuel v.! The day when David set up his kingdom prefigures the day when Christ will take the throne of this world and rule in righteousness. David could not have healed the cripples who sought to defend Jerusalem against his entry even if he had been willing to do so. But what David was powerless to do, our Lord *did*. Though refused His rights as He was, He nevertheless healed the lame and the blind on the very same spot where centuries before David had been obliged to act in judgment.

Whilst we must not misunderstand what David did in loyalty to the will of God, we may rejoice all the more in the superabounding grace of our Saviour both in His own day and in this. How beautifully the incident illustrates the declaration of the apostle Paul that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them!" And with what assurance of God's gracious reception the Lord's heralds may cry aloud to men "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 19, 20).

E. A. PETTMAN

NOTE ON BAPTISM

The real meaning of baptism is somewhat obscured by the way in which Acts xxii. 16 is translated in our Authorised Version. Recording the words of the devout Ananias to Saul of Tarsus, it says "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the Name of the Lord." A better translation reads: "Arise, and get baptized, and have thy sins washed away, calling on His name." (W.K.)

As the verse stands in our version, it looks as if the baptized person had to do something, namely to wash away his sins. It is clear from Rev. i. 5 that it is the Lord Himself who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and therefore this cannot be brought about in any other way. We rest upon what He has done, and do not trust in any work of our own. By calling on His Name we acknowledge this, and are baptized in recognition of the fact.

How much we owe to Him !

G. KNIGHT

A QUESTION OF VALUES

“What is the chaff to the wheat?” saith the Lord (Jer. xxiii. 28). A moment’s thought will decide the difference in the food values of wheat and chaff; and that will enable us to see the drift of this Divine query. This figurative language reveals the greatness of the gulf that exists between men’s theories and Jehovah’s revelation. Human “guesses at truth” are contrasted with the certain words of the living GOD.

This chapter (Jeremiah xxiii) might be read with profit by all who are in pretence or reality “seekers after truth”. Too many are merely speaking about what they believe is the truth, instead of allowing the Truth to speak for itself; and too often the word of GOD is misquoted, or half quoted, or its statements are dragged out of their natural place in order to mislead the unwary from the truth as it is in JESUS. Human souls that were made to live “not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”, cannot exist on human theories. Nothing less than the living Word of the living GOD will meet this need.

GOD’S word is like a fire that burneth the chaff, and as a hammer it breaketh the stony hearts, and as a light it reveals sin; and as a sword it penetrates to the depths of the heart; as a mirror, it reflects the needs of the soul, and it presents the salvation of GOD which can meet that need. It is the fine wheat by which the soul is fed: one verse of His Divine Word is worth a thousand human words.

Wherever this incorruptible seed is received and obeyed, it reproduces the life of GOD in the soul. No words of man can do what GOD’S Word can do for us. If you would know the saving power of the Scriptures, you must receive them with humble faith and obedience. And they will then prove their value to you and make you “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. iii. 15).

(Found amongst the papers of the late G. Knight.)

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

Evangelism is a matter that should exercise the mind and heart of every true believer in Christ. Having heard the good news himself, and, by the sovereign goodness of God, responded to it, he should be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and seek that others should be brought to the knowledge of salvation.

The apostle Paul himself, whilst rejoicing in the ministry committed to him in relation to the "Mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (Col. i. 25, 26), never ceased to announce the "gospel," and he associated himself with the ministry of it in a particularly personal way when he said "whereof I *Paul* am made a minister" (ver. 23). He never forgot the mercy shown to himself (see I Tim. i. 11-18).

We publish this month an article written by one of our esteemed and regular contributors, Mr. A. A. Tunley, of Peterborough, under the title "Workers together," which we are confident merits the careful consideration of *all*, young and old alike. May the Lord Himself prompt a heart response to the appeal.

Should any of our readers wish to comment on the matters raised, or have a helpful suggestion to offer, the Author or Editor will be delighted to hear from them with a view to those of like mind being brought into contact with one another.

" . . . Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."
(Romans xiii. 11)

LET DAYS SPEAK

St. Ives, Hunts.,

February, 1958.

DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

There is a common saying that "Circumstances alter cases": but there is one thing that circumstances cannot alter for the Christian, and that is the need for FAITH. In Mark xi. 22, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, God manifest in flesh, the Son of God, commends faith to His disciples, and through them to us by the power of His Holy Spirit. Whatever the circumstances, true faith remains the same.

In Hebrews xi., faith is described as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. In other words, faith is that which makes things hoped for and unseen as real as if they were already tangible and visible. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

First of all, God's existence is a certainty: and so is the fact that He is a rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. The apostle emphasises this in his address to the men of Athens. God is the Creator of all things, and does not require men's hands to make Him a dwelling place, or to supply Him with anything. He is the Giver to all of life and breath and all things. He made all nations of one blood, and settled their times and boundaries, leaving them to seek Him, and, feeling after Him, to find Him. He is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.

What a lesson this is for all who are just starting life intelligently, as well as for those who are advanced in years and experience! God is unchangeably the same, and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. "Thou God seest me" is the attitude of faith. Thoughts, words and deeds are *all not only noted by Him, but records are made of them, and God would have us conscious all the time of His nearness, and readiness to reward us.* Under these circumstances we ask and receive what we ask for. Does not our Saviour say "Abide in Me, and let My words abide in you"? In other words,

“Let My presence, and your position in Me, be realities to you; let My will become yours, and you will get all you ask for, and much more besides.”

Solomon was evidently brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by his parents, and he was ready when the Lord appeared to him in a dream by night with a wonderful offer: “Ask what I shall give thee,” to say: “Give Thy servant an understanding heart. . . that I may discern between good and bad” (I Kings iii. 9), or as it is in 2 Chron. i. 10: “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people . . . Thy people.” The Lord was pleased with this choice, and in granting his request He showed that, on account of it, He could trust Solomon with riches and honour above all before and after him.

What an offer there is to faith in Luke xi. 9! “Ask, and it *shall* be given you; seek, and ye *shall* find; knock, and it *shall* be opened unto you.” Does it not sound like a blank cheque? We who believe in this unique dispensation have not to say “Our Father, which art in heaven,” as the disciples were taught before the descent of the Holy Spirit, since we are looked upon as being ourselves in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus our Lord, and indwelt by His Holy Spirit. We are privileged to use the same term of endearment that the Lord Himself used when He was here in human form.

May your daily prayer be: “Father, grant that I may seek to do Thy will as a child of Thine through faith in Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent to die for me and make me Thine.”

Affectionately yours in Christ Jesus,

G. S. PURNELL.

WORKERS TOGETHER

Read: 2 Corinthians vi. 1.

It is a heartening thought that the work—the sowing, the tending, the reaping—is not ours but God’s; and a sobering thought that God can, and often does, carry it on without human aid at all, as for example in the conversion of Paul, the chief of sinners as he called himself.

The work of salvation begins with God; He commends His love towards us; but His grace makes use of those whose hearts are given to Him to do His service. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us . . ." (2 Cor. v. 20). Christ was God's great Ambassador, from Whose lips and in Whose life and death the fullness of divine love was manifested as never before. But it is the privilege of His followers, being now permanently and irrevocably associated with Him, to follow in His footsteps, and to continue the witness for God in this sin-stricken, Christ-rejecting world.

Christ's disciples do not all have the same gift or service, but in general they all come within one or other of the two classes which correspond with the divisions of David's army (I Samuel xxx. 24), namely, those who go out to battle, and those who abide by the stuff. So if we recognise the fact that we are in one or the other of these categories we cannot claim exemption from the injunctions of the Lord to His servants. Moreover in David's day it was decreed that those who maintained supplies in the rear were as necessary for the proper fulfilment of the combined operation as those in the forefront of the battle. In like manner we are persuaded those who actually do the preaching of the gospel are dependent upon the positive support of those who have the less spectacular part to perform, maybe largely on their knees.

Quite early in the gospel narrative we find the Lord impressing upon His followers the urgent necessity for evangelising. In those days it was the announcement of the King to Israel; now, it is the proclamation of God's grace to Jew and Gentile alike through Christ's death. His words, however, apply equally to both: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matt. ix. 37, 38).

When these words were spoken the Lord of the harvest was personally present with His disciples, sowing and reaping Himself, as well as calling to His service whom He would.

Now returned to heaven He is still Lord of the harvest, supplying the seed, and giving the gifts. If the work lags behind, and shamefacedly we must admit that it does, wherein lies the fault? When He was on earth the world was against Him, as it is against us today. Few indeed of any account attached themselves to His cause, though the common people heard Him gladly. But when the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon the followers of Jesus after His resurrection, great things were done, so that thousands who had formerly rejected Him, received Him, and were added to the church.

The Holy Spirit is still the power for the exercise of the gifts, and truly there is plenty of work in the harvest field. In the days following Pentecost the sheaves were numbered by thousands in a day. This may be the case now, taking the world over: only God knows; but if our corner of the field be quiet, let us consider. Is the arm of the Lord shortened that it cannot save? Or is His ear heavy that it cannot hear? We know instinctively that such is not the case. Neither would it seem from the parable of the Feast that there should be any slackening of the effort, or of the gathering in, towards the close of the dispensation. "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke xiv. 23).

The only thing left therefore is to consider where we come short. Where are the labourers ready to go forth, forsaking business and family ties to serve the Master? Where is the urgent and wide-spread sowing and reaping that should characterise the last days before the harvest is complete and the Lord comes? With fields white and labour short, what was the Master's instruction? "*Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.*" It should be noted that the Lord did not tell His disciples they were entitled to interpret the urgency of the need as constituting adequate authority to take matters into their own hands, but insists that *He* remains Lord of the harvest, and that it is *His* prerogative to send forth labourers, although He values and considers the prayers of those who are concerned as to the need.

The same faithful Witness said "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 19). Readers and writer alike should challenge themselves as to how far they have waited on the Lord, individually or with others, to ask Him to make known whom He has chosen to be in the forefront of the battle.

In the assembly at Antioch no doubt remained as to those whom the Lord would set apart for His work (Acts xiii. 2). But before the divine will became plain to them, how deeply exercised the whole assembly had been over the matter! Ministering to the saints was attended to, but in addition there was fasting, meaning that those in the assembly had the cause sufficiently at heart to refrain from many things quite legitimate in themselves in order to devote themselves to petitioning the Lord of the harvest concerning the thing that was foremost in their minds. They were thus able to recognise God's answer when it came, and afterwards, once again with fasting and prayer, they sent forth Paul and Barnabas to the work to which God had called them. The whole assembly was concerned in the matter and had fellowship in it, as was apparent from the laying on of their hands on those chosen. How could a mission such as this fail, everything having been arranged by God Himself, His servants merely offering themselves for the service as and where He decreed?

The happy outcome is recorded in Ch. xiv. 26, 27. After touring Asia, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all *that God had done with them*, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Let us ask ourselves for what purpose the present gospel dispensation is still being allowed to run its course, and the door of grace held open. If we answer, as we must, that it is for some still unsaved to be brought in, let each ask himself "*What does that mean to me?*"

Having arrived at the conclusion of the first stage, that our duty and common service is to pray to the Lord of the harvest that *He will send forth labourers into His harvest*, we realise that on the one hand we are absolved from any necessity to choose suitable candidates for the ministry, but on the other we are to recognise those He chooses. The harvest is His, and so is the choice of labourers.

It is commonly recognised that all believers have not the same gift, but can we not trust the One who divides His gifts to each as He will, to choose those most suited to His purpose to serve in the sphere He has in view? It is not a question of human resources but of what the Lord of the harvest can do with a submissive servant. In that gospel which particularly shows Christ as the perfect Servant, we read that He sent forth His disciples to serve equipped with nothing but a staff and the knowledge of His power—no purse, no scrip, no change of raiment, no bread, no money—literally with nothing that common prudence would consider necessary (see Mark vi. 7-9).

Further confirmation of the Lord's mind in these things is found later in the same chapter where the disciples, looking at things with natural prudence, recommended that the Lord should send a great company of needy folk away to purchase the necessities of life where they might, overlooking the fact that the resources from which their own supplies had come were adequate for others too. Moreover, the power committed to them just before, was still available. The instruction "Give ye them to eat" had not sunk in sufficiently to turn their thoughts from the natural computation that they would require two hundred pennyworth of bread from somewhere. They had to learn that what they had was enough, as was very soon demonstrated to them too in a way exceeding expectation. For, after all were filled, each disciple had a basket full left over—more than they had started with.

Surely this contains a lesson for us. Human extremity can never be beyond the resources of God to supply, not merely the minimum needed to bring us through, but to leave

us better furnished than before. Particularly is this the case with those who serve in the harvest field.

One may be intensely conscious of the need for sowing and reaping, yet at the same time feel the lack of what human wisdom would deem to be the minimum equipment, physical, mental and spiritual. Such a picture fits exactly into the framework of Mark vi; and the injunction "Give *ye* them to eat," echoes down through the years for the encouragement of the fearful servant. Note too that the record closes with the comment "They did all eat and were filled."

It is the Lord's prerogative to choose and to command, and when that is realised by the servant, nothing is impossible.

One more injunction, as short and decisive as the others, remains to be considered. It was given to the same little band of servants by the One they had followed through thick and thin during His ministry on earth. The disciples had been separated from their Master for a while at His death, but were re-united with Him after His resurrection. Moreover, since the Lord's rejection by His own nation, the harvest field was to be widened to include the whole world, and this little group of disciples was to form the core of the whole band of harvesters, from then until the Lord comes back. For, unrealised by them, He was about to leave them to return to the heavenly throne whence He came, but not without giving them their commission and the assurance of His presence and power. It would still be *His* harvest, for He says "All power is given *unto Me* in heaven and in earth. Go *ye* therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

First, be it noted, "All power" is His. Satan's power, though limited, was rampant in the world, and would very soon be felt by the Lord's servants. But how could that prevent the operation of the power by which even Satan himself had his being? That superior power had been intimately known by these disciples when, at the Master's bidding, they

had gone out, and returned reporting that even the demons were subject to them. Now, though removed from their visible sight, the Lord would still be available to them in all their difficulties, even *to the end of the age*. Their only responsibility was to act on His command, "Go ye . . ."

So today, the field is the world; the seed is the word of God, the Scripture makes clear the Lord's intention is that the field should be well sown with the seed. The enemy will be active, sowing tares, and these will grow up and choke the wheat if the good seed is not well sown and cared for. How encouraging therefore it is for the servants to know of the continual presence and power of Christ with them even as when He was visible to mortal eyes, a man amongst men. Indeed, He now has the added triumph, the news of which is spread abroad, that He has vanquished the devil and smashed his kingdom. Our foe is already defeated, and knows his time is short. Our triumphant Lord is the exalted Victor. What an encouragement to go forth and serve Him while it is day!

To sum up, may these three short but searching injunctions from the Lord of the harvest have a voice to all who take the place of being His servants! What they mean to each individual, and what action they call for in each case, is for decision between the Master and His servant, but none can ignore them without everlasting loss.

PRAY YE.....GIVE YE.....GO YE.....

A. A. TUNLEY.

WORKMEN IN THE VINEYARD

Read: Matthew xx. 1-16; Matthew xxii. 1-14; Luke xiii. 22-30.

THE parables recorded in these three scriptures are connected with the expressions "Many are called, but few are chosen" and also "the last shall be first, and the first last."

RIGHT OR REWARD.

The first parable, that of the workmen in the vineyard, was spoken by the Lord following Peter's question in chapter xix. 27, "Behold, we have forsaken all, what shall we have therefore?" A rich young ruler had enquired of the Lord Jesus

how he might obtain eternal life. At the end of a long discussion the Lord had told him to dispose of all his goods and to "Come and follow Me." This offer was unacceptable to the young man, and he went away sorrowful. Whereupon Peter enquired what those who *had* given up all to follow Jesus might expect to receive by way of reward.

The question shows that the disciples were counting upon recompense for the sacrifices they had made, and the Lord promised them "In the regeneration . . . ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (ver. 28). At the end of this promise however, He added a warning "But many that are first, shall be last, and the last shall be first." Those who think themselves entitled to a reward and expect the first place, will be given the last; whilst those who rely wholly upon the Lord's grace, will be first. The reward itself will be a matter of grace. This is the teaching of the Lord in the parable.

Care must be taken however in the spiritual application of some of the details of the parable. For example, in the parable the workmen who complain have an "evil eye." In the day when the Lord rewards His servants this will no longer be possible. Nor may we conclude that because all the workmen in the parable received equal pay, believers will receive equal recompense. Many references in Scripture indicate otherwise (Matt. xxv, 14-30; 2 Cor. v. 10). Even if "payment" were equal, rewards will vary, and all will be a matter of grace.

GRACE TAKES PRECEDENCE OF RIGHT

The workmen whom the householder had engaged at the beginning of the day agreed with him that they should receive one "denarius." The second group—those engaged at the third, sixth and ninth hours—merely accepted their master's undertaking that "whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive," whilst those who were not sent into the vineyard until the eleventh hour appear to have made no bargain at all as to recompense—they completely trusted themselves to the grace of their employer. Nor was their confidence unrewarded,

for they received their wages in advance of the others, and they received as much as the others, one denarius.

We are not told anything concerning the second group, that is those who were to receive what was right. Obviously they received more than their work was worth. It was the "first" who were not content with their denarius, and murmured that "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden, and heat of the day."

A similar attitude of mind may be observed with some of the 400 warriors of David who were unwilling to divide the spoils of victory with the 200 who had tarried by the stuff (I Sam. xxx. 22-25). David, however, acting with fulness of grace, laid it down (and it became a statute and an ordinance in Israel thereafter) that the booty should be shared equally between those who went to the battle and those who tarried behind.

OUR OWN ATTITUDE IN THE LORD'S SERVICE.

There are times when we may find ourselves slipping into the habit of thinking that we are doing more for the Lord than others. We ought therefore to apply the warning of these parables to ourselves "Many that are first, shall be last, and the last first." Not of course that the servant of the Lord may not look for the reward that is promised (I Cor. ix. 25; 2 Tim. iv. 8). Indeed, to despise the reward would be to despise Him who gives it. But for the encouragement of those who were only a short time in the vineyard, and could not therefore do much, but performed what little they were able to accomplish with a faithful heart, the converse is added "and the last shall be first."

Furthermore the Lord adds "For many be called, but few chosen." In these words the "many" refers to those whom the Lord calls to service in the vineyard—applicable to all who know Him. But how few there are that perform their work with a due sense of the sovereign grace extended to them. In the parable it was only the "few" of those who worked in the vineyard that were content to leave all question of recompense to their master's grace. Such will have no cause to be ashamed of their confidence.

By God's grace may we all be found within the company of those to whom the King will say "Friend, go up higher" (Luke xiv. 10).

(Adapted from a translation by J. Mol, Senr., of an article in the Dutch "Messenger of Peace," by Johan Fyn van Draak.)

"SPEAK YE UNTO THE ROCK"

Read: Numbers xx. 7-13.

This is an affecting narrative. Moses desired to serve the Lord, and to serve His people; but he did not do so in God's way. Instead, therefore, of its being acceptable service, it was so displeasing to the Lord that he was not allowed to go into the land on account of it. It was zeal, but not according to knowledge.

God told Moses to take the rod, but did not tell him to use it as he did. God also told him to speak to the rock, but instead of that Moses smote it. God did not use any rebuke about the people, but Moses called them "rebels". All these things show that Moses was not serving in the temper and spirit of the Lord.

To seek to satisfy God's thirsty people was well, but in doing so he did not act for the glory of God. And it is important to notice that, notwithstanding Moses' failure, God acted then as He often does now: He brought blessing to the people, though He chastened his servant for his inconsistent conduct. The failure was very great, not only in its disobedience to the Lord's plain command, but also in spoiling the type, which was doubtless intended to teach us that the rock, once smitten, need never be smitten again, but would give forth refreshing streams at the cry of faith, as we now know Christ (I Cor. x. 4).

Much religious service in the present day, we fear, is not acceptable to God. Much there may be which God's eye detects as being chiefly the busy energy of the flesh, and not spiritual; not in the obedience of faith, not in accordance with the truth of God. How important that we should not only be

addicting ourselves to the Lord's work, but that we should carry it out in God's way and for His glory!

Declension of soul and failure in service generally go together. The Christian's true path is communion with God and obedience to His word; and the backsliding and failing Christian must return thither, if he would be happy and glorify God. The believer's calling is unto "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ"; to walk with God; to realise that all his springs are in Him, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Christ, the true Rock that was smitten, is his all-satisfying portion.

The believer has to do with the Lord Jesus who was crucified, who said "It is finished!" and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He knows that that one finished work of eternal redemption is perfect, and that by it Christ has perfected for ever all those who truly believe in Him; so that there remains no more sacrifice for sins. The believer therefore looks to Jesus risen and glorified; the slain Lamb on the right hand of God; the One who has all power in heaven and on earth. His business, then, in every need is to "speak to the Rock", and to prove, as taught by John vii. 37, 38, that living water continually flows from Him.

[The above remarks were found among the papers of the late Godfrey Knight, and are in his own handwriting.]

FRAGMENT

Moses in haste again uplifts the rod (Num. xx. 11). Where was his faith? Was his eye dim to the full light of this clear Gospel type? The rock was smitten once for all. No further stroke was needed or allowed. Christ suffers once. His one grand sacrifice is sin's one death. The wound once given buys remission of all guilt for ever. Believe, delight, and glory in the one cross. It is enough. It is an all-sufficient price. The thought of repetition is ignorance, distrust, and blasphemy. O blessed Jesus! Thy one offering is all salvation. I would pray unto Thee with every breath, but woe unto me, if I bid Thee die again.

(Extracted)

HYMN

God and Father, we Thy children
Bow before Thy face,
While together we remember
Gratefully Thy grace.

Grace that in eternal purpose
Marked us out to be
Sharers of Thy richest blessing,
Everlastingly.

Yet in time how far we wandered,
Caring naught for Thee,
Heedless, too, of all Thy goodness,
Showered so plenteously!

Then at last a light from heaven,
In effulgence bright,
On our heart's dark desolation
Shone in might.

From the radiant face in glory
Of the One who died,
Telling out the sweetest story—
God is glorified.

And a voice of mystic power
Broke upon our soul,
Overwhelming, yet in mercy,
Healing, making whole.

Called and graced in Thy beloved
In Thy love we rest,
Holy, without blame before Thee,
Perfectly made blest.

Thus relieved from sin's dominion,
We in Thee delight,
Purged in conscience, meet for worship,
With the saints in light.

So to Thee, our God and Father,
'Tis our joy to raise
Songs of endless adoration,
Gratitude and praise.

J. P. BULL
(1893-1955)

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. . . In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” Eccles: xi. 1, 2, 6.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

It has been encouraging to find that the articles dealing with prophetic truth which have appeared during recent months in WORDS OF HELP aroused widespread interest in this country and abroad: so much so that the demand for additional copies of the April issue has exhausted the available supply despite the larger number printed this year.

Many who believe the Lord's return for His people to be very near share the conviction that Satan is making a determined effort to distract attention from this particular teaching of Scripture which, above all others, bespeaks his own certain and imminent doom, namely, the truth of the Second Coming of Christ. For our part, we would regard such tactics by the enemy as calling for a re-doubling of the effort to proclaim our blessed Saviour's approaching glorification upon earth even as He is already exalted in heaven, and to shed abroad as widely as possible the light which scripture has to throw on coming events.

In this issue we print an article by Mr. E. H. Chamberlain of Rye, Sussex, giving four reasons why every Christian should study prophecy, to be followed (D.V.) by a series of articles by him dealing with various aspects of prophetic truth, beginning next month with an examination of scriptures foretelling the Apostasy of Christendom. We hope it may be possible also to publish further notes of addresses by Mr. John Weston, whose life-long study of scripture prophecy is widely known and appreciated.

Readers should bear in mind the special blessing pronounced upon those who give heed to the book of Revelation:

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of
"this prophecy, and keep those things which are written
"therein: for the time is at hand."
(Rev. i. 3.)

WHY A CHRISTIAN SHOULD STUDY PROPHECY

(Four Reasons)

FIRST—Because such a large part of the Bible is Prophecy.

If it is important for the Christian to study the word of God, then it must be important for him to study prophecy. Of the Old Testament, the Prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, take up about one-quarter; there is also much prophecy in the other three-quarters. In the New Testament there is likewise the wholly prophetic book of Revelation, and nine chapters in other books almost entirely devoted to prophecy. Most of these chapters indeed are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. There are in addition many prophecies occupying parts of other chapters.

Hence, if we are going to leave aside the study of prophecy, what a large part of the scriptures is going to be neglected by us! And if it be true that "Every scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" (2 Tim. iii. 16), what loss to our souls this neglect will mean! We might well ask why God should have caused so much of His word to be devoted to prophecy, if His children were not intended to read it.

SECOND—Because Prophecy is commended to us by both the Lord Jesus and His servants, as of Special Importance.

Among the precious revelations which the Holy Spirit would make when He came, prophecy is specially mentioned by our Lord. "He will show you things to come." No wonder then, that in the Book of Revelation there is a special blessing for "him that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein."

There is no doubt of course that the special mention, in the singular, of "*him* that readeth," as distinct from the plural "*they* that hear," referred to conditions in the early days of the Church, when few possessed their own copies of the scriptures, and they had to be read aloud in the meetings so that all might hear the word of God. But does this fact diminish

at all the force of this exhortation to read and hear, now that each of us has his own copy of the Scriptures? Surely not. Perhaps there were some in those days, as there are now, who excused themselves from reading or hearing this particular book because of its difficulty. Hence the special blessing promised to those who persevere in spite of the undoubted difficulty.

The Apostle Peter in his second epistle speaks of "the more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp that shineth in a dark place." We might well ask ourselves if *we* are doing well in taking heed thereto, or are neglecting it.

Besides these exhortations, the *example* of the Lord's servants should speak to us. It is easy to see that the writers of both Old and New Testament books had their minds filled with the prophetic word, for they are continually referring to it. Next look at Daniel, on his knees in prayer and confession before God when he "understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." His study of the prophecy led to his prayer and confession, and this in turn to further revelations from God.

THIRD—Because of the light which Prophecy throws on Current Events.

Just as Daniel found in the prophetic word the light he needed in his day, so the present-day believer who is instructed in prophecy is kept from sharing either the hopes or fears of the world around him as startling events unfold themselves. Prophecy, as it tells him what is to be the end, enables him to pursue a steady course, while waiting for God's Son from heaven.

To the world, the way in which the nations are so keenly interested in the Middle East speaks of a struggle for oil; but to the instructed believer each new event in that region, whether Russian intrigues, Arab hostility to Israel, or Israel's

own endeavours to maintain her footing as a nation, is a fresh step towards the setting of the stage for that final conflict in which the Lord Himself will intervene. Likewise when he beholds professing Christendom still cherishing its old delusion of being able gradually to reform this world until it is fit to become God's kingdom, he is warned by the very different picture which prophecy paints, to keep himself clear of such vain hopes.

FOURTH—Because it is so intimately concerned with the coming glory of our Blessed Lord.

No prophecy of the scripture, states the apostle Peter, is of any private interpretation. That is to say, no prophecy is an isolated one, but has its place in the grand revelation of God's great purpose, "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, even in Him in whom we have obtained an inheritance." To everyone who loves the Lord Jesus, the revelation of these things ought to be of the deepest interest. The Lord has taken us into His confidence, treating us, as He says, not as servants, but as friends "for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."

Let us view prophecy then, not as concerning the doings of this or that personage, or the destiny of this or that nation; but rather as the unfolding beforehand, for the encouragement and delight of our faith, of the means whereby every foe shall be subjugated, every evil overcome, in order that our beloved Lord and Master might have His true place, being glorified and acknowledged as Head over all.

E. CHAMBERLAIN.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts . . ."

(2 Peter i.19)

At the time of going to press with this issue of **WORDS OF HELP**, news has been received of the home-call on July 23rd of Mr. J. C. Kell, the author of the article which follows this notice. Further reference to be made next month (D.V.).

WITH CHRIST, WHICH IS FAR BETTER

BLESSING AND TRIUMPH FROM TRIBULATION

Read: Romans v. 1-11.

From the earlier part of this epistle we have learned that "there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Righteousness acceptable to God cannot be attained on the ground of works that we can do. But the righteousness of God (righteousness of that character) by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all them that believe. God is just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Here, it is well known, the English language fails to preserve the direct connection between "just," "justifier," "justification," and "righteousness" which is obvious in the original Greek. Righteousness shall be imputed to us, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Having believed, the question of our sins is therefore settled for ever. Reckoned righteous by God Himself, against Whom in fact all sins are committed, we have peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, and access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice (or boast) in hope of the glory of God. Such a summary of chapters i. to iv. is of course very incomplete.

The section of the epistle beginning at chapter v. 12 deals with sin itself, but first the Spirit of God led the apostle to

deal in verses 3-11 with external circumstances through which a believer finds himself passing. *Before him is the hope of the glory of God, but meanwhile he finds himself passing through every kind of tribulation*, physical, mental and spiritual. The believer should not be surprised or discouraged by this, for the Lord Himself told His disciples in the upper room, on the last Passover night, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33). As on so many other subjects in the epistles, the Spirit of God enlarges, expands, extends the saying of the Lord Jesus in the verses we are considering.

It may perhaps be helpful to consider briefly some different forms of tribulation. All of course are permitted by God. There are the various kinds of persecution from the unconverted. In the apostle's time these were cruder than today. Stoning, scourging, imprisonment, torture and death were quite common. They still continue in some parts of the world, e.g. Colombia, as some of us have doubtless recently read. But in most countries they take the more subtle form of sarcasm; social isolation; efforts to impose rules and controls conflicting with a godly conscience, with penalties for non-compliance; and many forms of persecution which, though perhaps petty in themselves, are calculated cumulatively to depress and discourage.

Then there are the tribulations common to mankind, both physical and mental, such as illness, bereavement, poverty, sudden loss of money, accidents etc., towards which the attitude of the unbeliever at best goes no further than "What can't be cured must be endured," and at its worst is exemplified in the advice of Job's wife "Curse God and die." Again, there are tribulations which are the special efforts of Satan and evil spirits—spiritual wickedness in heavenly places—directed at the Christian's spirit. Included among these are the disputes and divisions about doctrine, ceremonial and practice that have occurred, and still occur, among Christians. Readers may well be able to add to all these from their own experience, but whatever form tribulation may take, the believer should be able to say without reserve "We glory in tribulations also" for the reasons which follow.

Patience (better “endurance” as in New Tr.) would only be a theoretical abstraction if there were no tribulations to endure; and it is God’s purpose that endurance should be one of the qualities enabling the believer to glory in tribulations rather than to succumb, sustained by the consciousness that he stands in grace, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. Again, without endurance there could never be the *experience* which accumulates as tribulations are endured with patience—experience of that sustaining grace of God in which we stand. Experience of this grace leads on to *hope*, just the opposite of dreading the onset of further tribulations. God having carried us safely through all that is past, we trust Him for all that lies ahead. The Christian’s hope never has an element of doubt in it as all worldly hopes have. This hope, based on the grace wherein we stand, looking onward to the glory of God, and built up through tribulations by endurance and experience, never lets us down, never makes us ashamed. On the contrary, *the love of God*, working through all these things, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Next we are reminded of the character of that love. It was while we were without strength and ungodly that Christ died for us, and God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Now, having believed, being justified by faith, having peace with God, standing in His grace, rejoicing in hope of His glory, learning to endure tribulation, gaining experience, becoming established in hope, we find that same love shed abroad in our hearts, permeating our spiritual being. Moreover, having been justified by Christ’s blood, and knowing we shall be saved from wrath through Him, reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we shall be *saved by His life*. These last words the writer understands to include the fact that Christ in resurrection life will save, or preserve, us all along the journey we tread down here, whatever the tribulations may be.

“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation.” (“Rejoice” (ver. 2), “glory” (ver. 3), “joy” (ver. 11)

are the same verb in the Greek: J.N.D. translates as "boast." Dean Alford as "triumph.") To joy in God Himself is a greater blessing and privilege (if comparison in such sublime things can be made) than rejoicing in hope of His glory, or glorying in tribulation. Does it not imply some degree of knowledge, not only of His attributes but of Himself, acquired through experience of the love that provided Christ as a Substitute for us when we were yet sinners, and as One who now lives to save us all along the way—love, too, that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit?

The writer is conscious how shallowly he has dealt with the depths of these verses through lack of experience, but as we consider them we draw encouragement and comfort from such tribulations as we may be allowed to pass through. May we be able to say indeed that we glory in tribulations, and may our hearts respond to the love of God, which is shed abroad in them by the Holy Ghost, in fuller praise and worship! Weighing up the passage in the presence of God it is inconceivable that any believer in the Lord Jesus would prefer a life without tribulation and without all its consequential blessings.

Thus the way is prepared for the subjects of "sin," "the flesh" etc. to be dealt with, leading up to the triumphant outburst by the apostle at the end of chapter viii.—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall *tribulation . . . ?*" (ver. 35). "I am persuaded that neither death nor *life . . . nor things present, nor things to come . . .* shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ver. 38, 39).

J. C. KELL.

ASHAMED AND NOT ASHAMED

In his innocent estate, to which by the way he can never return, man was not ashamed (Gen. ii. 25), but sin coming into the world has brought with it shame, and man has cause to be ashamed as he sees himself a sinner in the sight of God.

However, before God drove out Adam and Eve from the garden, He clothed them with coats of skin of His own making, an early witness to the fact that He Himself, in wondrous grace and righteousness, would provide a covering for the guilty.

Adam went forth therefore from the place of his shameful fall having heard the word concerning the woman's seed. It was a message of life to him, for he called his wife's name Eve, "because she was the mother of all living."

Furthermore they were covered with robes (provided through the death of another), a foreshadowing surely of that robe of righteousness God had promised of old, and with which He now arrays those who come by faith to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ—righteousness through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, made known in the gospel, which is unto all and upon all that believe (Rom. iii. 22). So it could be written "He that believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. ix. 33 and x. 11).

Alas! that after the lapse of centuries, proud religious man bearing the name of Christian, needs to be reminded of his nakedness (Rev. iii. 18), and is called upon to heed the Lord's word: "I counsel thee to buy of me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." This word is very necessary because so-called Christian men have, like the Jew of old, gone about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom. x. 3). The true believer on the other hand, so far from being ashamed, now has boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, such being the efficacy of that one offering of Christ on the cross that the Holy Ghost witnesseth, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

In addition to the foregoing, there is a variety of ways in which the words at the heading of this article are used in scripture. The Psalmist could say "I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed (cxix. 46). Yet with a sense of his own weakness and dependence he could add, "Uphold me according unto Thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope" (ver. 116).

In this connection how confident is the note of the apostle Paul, despite the afflictions and reproach he had suffered, when he says "Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that

which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12). He had already exhorted Timothy "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner" (ver. 8); and further, in his very happy commendation of Onesiphorus, he says "He oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain" (ver. 16). How much this meant to the beloved apostle in view of the fact that "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (ver. 15)!

Again in Chap. ii. 15, he could still further exhort Timothy "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Paul laboured and taught in the light of *that day*, and while to the Philippians he could say "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ch. iii. 20), in writing to Timothy in view of responsibility in service here, he spoke of the same One as "the Lord, the righteous Judge" (2 Tim. iv. 8).

Yet one more reference, the apostle John in looking forward to the day of Christ's appearing could write to the family of God: "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we (the apostles) may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (I John ii. 28). A similar thought is found in the second epistle, verse 8.

T. WILSON.

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XXXI—XXXIII.

Twenty years have elapsed in the history of Jacob since he took up his abode with Laban. In chapter xxxii. 1, we read "Jacob went on his way." To go on our way we need guidance. Chapter xxxi. gives us the second chapter in the history of the spiritual life of Jacob, and deals with God's gracious guidance.

All who have known the grace of God desire guidance by God. Guidance is therefore

- (1) desired by all who know grace;
- (2) defined in scripture;
- (3) described in the life of Jacob.

It is desired by all who know grace because "It is not in man to direct his steps." It is defined in scripture so that we may know exactly how to obtain God's guidance.

The guidance of God is a perpetual miracle in the lives of His people, because of the difficulties which it encounters. We discern it very faintly now, but we shall recognise it very fully hereafter. Though we may not understand it at the time, we are led the right way when we follow God. Jacob's own summary on his death-bed (xlviii. 15, 16) is a very satisfactory comment on God's grace and guidance. Jacob's character was reproduced in his sons.

Guidance desired. God's guidance is desired by all who know His grace:

- (a) against the bewildering maze of human affairs in which our lot is cast;
- (b) against the steady opposition of the enemy, who uses men and things subtly, covertly, or openly, to turn us out of the pathway;
- (c) above our own abysmal ignorance, and the incredible perversity of the human heart;
- (d) athwart all the currents and cross-currents of schemes and plannings.

Guidance defined (see Psalm xxxii. 8, 9). Here we learn that guidance is certain, and it always comes along one of two roads. There is the high-road of communion (Psalm xxxii. 8)—see John viii. 12. Our Lord walked through this world guided. He walked along the high-road of communion. God's guidance will come along this high-road if we are willing ourselves. Abraham lived almost entirely along that high-road. God could speak to him as His friend (so our Lord could say, "I call you not servants . . . but . . . friends"). This reacted upon Abraham's life. At the time of the destruction of Sodom, Abraham was in the counsels of God, and so in the position in which he could intercede.

Jacob seems to have travelled for the most part along the lower road of guidance. He was very largely guided by how things shaped. For instance, in chap. xxxi. 1, 2, Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, and beheld the countenance of Laban. Then the Lord said to him "Return" (ver. 13). It is true that God came in, but it is equally true that Jacob was preparing to do it on the force of circumstances.

Before us two roads are always presented, the high-road of communion, of spiritual elevation, or the lower road of circumstances, with all its attendant disadvantages. God will guide. He will guide by communion. If not, we shall get there all the same, but we shall be driven by circumstances.

Guidance described. In Chap. xxviii. Jacob experiences the grace of God. In xxix. there is a reminder that grace neither bars from human love nor does it free us from domestic cares. The fact that we have known the grace of God does not keep us from getting married, for example. Chapter xxx. warns us of the danger of becoming engrossed in seeking prosperity and comfort, whether in our home or in our business affairs. Chapter xxxi. gives us the very unpleasant circumstances which are used to re-awaken Jacob, and to reveal his spiritual character, and the faith embedded in it. Chapter xxxii. is the complement of xxviii. It is the second great spiritual crisis, and it leads to the changed name and the changed walk.

Names have a wonderful significance to our minds, the very mention of a name bringing a crowd of associations. This is abundantly illustrated by the names, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, and Calvary. In these chapters we have:

- (1) Beth-el (xxx. 13)—"God's house": the place where God met Jacob in pure grace;
- (2) Mizpah (xxx. 49)—"God's beacon, or witness";
- (3) Mahanaim (xxxii. 2)—"God's host";
- (4) Peniel, or Penuel (xxxii. 30, 31)—"God's face."

Our section leaves Jacob happily in possession of the things that constituted the full and true equipment for a real pilgrim. These were (a) the tent (xxxiii. 19); (b) the altar (xxxiii. 20); (c) faith in the Lord God of Israel, shown by the name of the altar.

With regard to Jacob, it is true that he did not walk in the intimacy of communion to the same extent as his father or his grandfather. He was certainly true to his name in that he was a supplanter and a deceiver, and this character he carried throughout his life. It is well to note, however, that in spite of all his failings he had respect for the birthright and the blessing. The value he set upon them is shown by the very fact of his trying to obtain them by false means, and in this way he shows a certain amount of spiritual intelligence. Jacob valued the birthright and the blessing; Esau, in direct contrast, did not. Esau seems to have had no spiritual discernment whatever; notice his attitude in Chap. xxviii. 6-9. Esau, seeing that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father, took a wife of the daughters of Ishmael, himself the child of the flesh. Jacob, in spite of his shortcomings, was the man of God; Esau was not. Moreover, it is important to notice that throughout scripture God places Jacob with Abraham and Isaac in the oft-repeated formula, "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." After the death of Isaac, Jacob was the foremost man of God in the world, and therefore had great dignity.

The New Testament counterpart of Jacob's wrestling in Chap. xxxii. 24-32, is "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). It was not in his wrestling that Jacob prevailed, but when he clung. In verse 26 we read, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." This is a lesson for us. We shall not overcome by striving, but by owning our weakness and clinging to Him. Here also Jacob has come to an end of himself. When asked, "What is thy name?" he replies "Jacob." He confesses that he still has the old nature, that he is no better. He is still Jacob, the deceiver; Jacob, the supplanter. We all have to confess, sooner or later, in our Christian life, that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans vii. 18). When we have come down to this we can prevail.

THE DIVINE WRESTLER

“I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me” (Gen. xxxii. 26)

Come, oh Thou Traveller unknown
Whom still I hold, but cannot see;
My company before is gone
And I am left alone with Thee;
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

I need not tell Thee who I am;
My misery or sin declare;
Thyself hast called me by my name;
Look on Thy hands, and read it there.
But who, I ask Thee, who art Thou?
Tell me Thy name, and tell me now.

Wilt Thou not yet to me reveal
Thy new, unutterable Name?
Tell me, I still beseech Thee, tell:
To know it now resolved I am;
Wrestling, I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy nature know.

Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self despair;
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer;
Speak, or Thou never hence shall move,
And tell me if Thy Name is love.

'Tis Love—'tis Love—Thou diedst for me,
I hear Thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Pure, Universal Love Thou art;
To me, to all, Thy mercies move;
Thy nature and Thy Name is Love.

My prayer hath power with God: the grace
Unspeakable I now receive;
Through faith I see Thee face to face,
I see Thee face to face, and live;
In vain I have not wept and strove;
Thy nature and Thy Name is Love.

I know Thee, Saviour, Who Thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend;
Nor wilt Thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end.
Thy mercies never shall remove;
Thy nature and Thy Name is Love.

CHARLES WESLEY.

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. . . In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” Eccles: xi. 1, 2, 6.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

ONE Lord's day afternoon, only a very short time before his home-call on the 23rd July last after a long illness, the author of the first article appearing this month handed the manuscript to the Editor with the remark, "This may be the last piece I shall write for you."

It was an article Mr. Kell had been particularly anxious to complete. During the previous week he had told his daughter that he had prayed for the necessary strength to finish it by the weekend, a request God was graciously pleased to grant. So that this lovely piece may be regarded as the author's farewell message to readers generally of WORDS OF HELP. We commend its profound theme to the careful study and prayerful meditation of all.

J. C. Kell has been a regular contributor to these pages for many years. The Editor wishes to place on record his gratitude to God for the help given by His servant, whose ministry with the pen has been a help to so many. May others come forward to fill the gap caused by his departure to be with Christ.

In point of fact this month's article proved to be not quite his last, for Mr. Kell felt constrained to write one further piece—a letter of counsel addressed to young Christians—which he himself suggested should appear as a New Year message for 1959. We hope (D.V.) to adopt this suggestion.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13).

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY DISPLAYED IN GRACE

Read Ephesians i. 3-23; iii. 8-12.

These scriptures are surely among the most treasured by the saints of God, to be read over and over again, as the blessings into which those who were once "dead in sins" (ii. 5) have been brought through faith are realised more and more deeply. We cannot read them too often, nor rejoice too much in the grace that has made them true of us, though of course we must not neglect the rest of the Holy Scriptures, for the whole word of God is needed for our spiritual growth and nourishment.

But there is another aspect of these scriptures in Ephesians which, perhaps, we are inclined to overlook, or even to shy from, namely *God's Sovereignty*. Yet how could those who were "dead in sins" be brought into such blessings any other way? In fact, the Holy Spirit through the apostle presses the sovereignty of God upon us in a sevenfold way. In the Authorised Version the word "according" introduces each of these.

I. CHOOSING BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

"According as He hath chosen us in Him (Christ) *before the foundation of the world*" (ver. 4). You and I by nature walked "according to the course of this world" etc. (ii. 2). God did not wait until He could see whether we tried to be better before exercising His sovereignty. He did not wait until the Cross; nor, going back in time, until He had laid down a moral standard in the law; nor, going back still further, until He had dealt in drastic judgment with mankind in the flood. No, it was before the foundation of the world that He chose us in Christ, "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." How perfect is His omniscience! How absolute His sovereignty! Nothing that has intervened in the ages that followed has modified, or could modify, His choice. Here we have a solid basis for

assurance and peace, a basis independent of what *we* are or could be, have done or could do, and we thank God for His sovereign choice.

II. THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL

God's Sovereignty was not exercised on our behalf just as a display of omnipotence. When man has a measure of power he is tempted to display it for its own sake, and sometimes with evil pleasure. But God has revealed to us this character of His sovereign will in that He has made known His *good pleasure* (v. 5) in bringing us into close relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ, and taking us into His "grace and favour" in the Beloved (N.T. and note). This is all ante-dated, as it were, for He marked us out for it beforehand (predestinated us). As we contemplate this character of His sovereignty our hearts respond with "praise of the glory of His grace." But it is necessary to link this closely with the next.

III. THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE

According to the riches of His grace (ver. 7). In order that God's sovereignty could be extended so bountifully toward us in grace, and our sins forgiven, the price of redemption must be paid in consistency with His other attributes than omnipotence, such as holiness and righteousness. The price paid was no less than the blood of Jesus Christ, the Beloved One. So were manifested the *riches* of His grace in which His sovereignty acted. We may well pause here for a moment to consider how far we have entered into "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," "the glory of His grace," and "the riches of His grace," and then to remind ourselves that these are entirely the outcome of the Sovereignty of God.

The foregoing three phrases are perhaps primarily concerned with our *position* through sovereign grace. The next two let us into the secrets of God's *purpose*.

IV. HIS GOOD PLEASURE . . . PURPOSED IN HIMSELF

“According to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (ver. 9). The mystery of His will, never before revealed to man, has been made known to us. In all that God has done, some of which we know about, His sovereignty was working, is working, and will yet work until the series is completed, with one supreme purpose in view. Our limited knowledge includes the creation of angels and heavenly beings, the creation of the heavens and the earth, the creation of man, the dealings with man without law, under law, under grace (as today), without restraint, under the awful judgments of the opened seals, under Christ’s millennial rule, Satan bound, Satan loose again; but in all these the purpose is the same. I repeat that the secret of that purpose has been made known to us. It is that all things in the heavenlies and on earth should be gathered together in one in Christ. Everything is to redound to Christ’s honour and glory. We learn here not only God’s sovereignty in purposing this result in Himself but His sovereignty acting in good pleasure and grace toward us in making His purpose known to us.

This is closely linked with the following. But before leaving this subject I feel we should consider how our appreciation of the glory of the Person of Christ is enhanced the more we enter into God’s purpose here revealed.

V. THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL

“According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (ver. 11). The more we learn of the glory of the Person of Christ and of the perfection of His life upon earth and His work at Calvary for God’s glory, the more readily we shall understand, and say Amen to, God’s purpose revealed to us in the preceding passage. But we now reach the wonderful fact that *we* have obtained an inheritance in this supremely exalted Christ, being predestinated that we should be to the praise of His glory, and that we have even now received the earnest of that inheritance, being sealed with “that Holy Spirit of promise.” Lest this should be falsely appropriated by any, the Holy Spirit led the apostle to

write "in Whom (i.e. Christ) after that ye believed" (or better, simply, "having believed"), reminding us that these wonderful blessings are only true of those who have believed in Christ and consequently have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Is not this another wonderful example of the Sovereignty of God working in grace? It is presented for our instruction as "*after the counsel of His will.*" It was fully considered and planned in eternity. Perhaps "counsel" suggests Father, Son and Holy Spirit, just as we find that God said "Let us make man," etc. (Gen. i, 26). But it is His *own* will. No angel, no created being, had any part in that planning. It is purely the work of the sovereignty of God.

VI. HIS MIGHTY POWER

"According to the working of His mighty power" (ver. 19). How can we who by nature were in the condition described in the beginning of chapter ii. ever know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe? This requires the operation of His mighty power, to give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him and to enlighten the eyes of our understanding. That same *mighty power* which was exercised and manifested in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ from among the dead to a position at God's right hand "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet," has been and is being exercised on our behalf, and that in a twofold way. God has given Christ to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. This is collective. He has also quickened us together with Christ (saving us by grace), and has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (ii. 6, 7). This, perhaps, is more individual. Such is the working of God's Sovereignty

in *mighty power* and richness of grace, operating for our blessing now and onward in the undefined ages to come.

VII. HIS PURPOSE IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD

“According to the eternal purpose which *He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Chap. iii. 11). This, the seventh of these passages concerning “God’s Sovereignty displayed in Grace,” reminds us that Christ Jesus our Lord is the centre of it all. He is God’s Anointed One; He is the Babe in the manger, the Man of Calvary, now crowned with glory and honour, to Whom every knee shall bow; He is our Lord, risen and glorified, Who has bought us, to Whom we gladly own homage and allegiance are due, for Whose coming we wait. God’s sovereignty displayed in grace is the manifestation of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and of the fellowship of the mystery—the mystery of Christ and His church, now revealed, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by (i.e. through) the church the manifold wisdom of God.

The two passages beginning “according to” in Chap. iii. 16 and iii. 20, being part of the apostle’s prayer, have a different character, and so are not dealt with in this article.

Beloved reader, this has taken me many weeks to write in my weakness, but the underlying theme of *God’s sovereignty displayed in grace* has been with me throughout. How blessed and privileged are we who have been born and are living in the era of which this is the great characteristic! I rejoice in the absoluteness of God’s sovereignty manifested in this seven-fold way. For surely, and with all reverence, I can write that on no other ground could grace—not to say “the exceeding riches of His grace”—be extended to me but by His eternal purpose, good pleasure, and mighty power, that eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus my Lord. I venture to suggest to you that, not content with just a cursory reading of this article, you keep the subject before you for meditation and the enrichment of your thankfulness and praise.

J. C. KELL

THE APOSTASY OF CHRISTENDOM

The rosy dream of a continually improving world, which until the last few years has dominated men's minds, has largely faded; the corresponding dream of many Christians, that the Church would exert an increasing influence upon the world, until it finally became fit for the Kingdom of God, is still firmly held in many quarters. In fact it is taught that this is the only hope for the world. But the teaching of scripture as regards both world and church is quite different. The present article seeks to show what is the predicted end of the church on earth according to the scriptures.

Certainly the proper hope of the church on earth is to be taken to heaven when the Lord comes. This is the hope, more or less clearly understood, of all true believers. However, there is in addition a large mass of professors—how large only the Lord Himself knows—to whom He will say in the words of the parable "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

The Epistles to the seven churches in Revelation, chapters ii. and iii., set out, in their prophetic aspect, seven successive phases of the church, though the last four epistles all represent phases which endure until the Lord comes, as is shown by the fact that they make reference to His coming. The *final* phase, represented by the epistle to Laodicea, has however, some startling features which none of the others have.

In it the Lord finds nothing whatever to commend. It is lacking in the most fundamental Christian possessions, being both blind and naked. "God," says the apostle Paul, "Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But in Laodicea they are still blind! Also, they know nothing of the blessings of being clothed in a divinely provided righteousness. Is this then a Christian church? Alas, it is the condition of many so-called Christian churches at the present day.

Moreover, Christ Himself is outside. With all their church activities (for they are in their own eyes "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing") they know Him not. And in their professed service to Him, their "works," the

Lord finds no pleasure; they are nauseous to Him; and He utters the terrible sentence "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Now this complete rejection by the Lord is not, let it be remarked, conditional in any way. It is His final sentence upon the Assembly on earth. True, there is blessing for the individual who hears His word—"I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." But there is no hint of blessing for the church as a whole, and when the true believers are taken to heaven when the Lord comes* what remains can still continue as before in all its "activities," but the Lord will have rejected it utterly.

We may notice, too, how the promise to the "overcomer" brings out the terrible condition of Laodicea. For just as they are ignorant of elementary Christian blessings, so they have no notion of the Christian hope. The Millennial reign of Christ, in any substantial sense, is now no longer believed by the professing church as a whole, let alone our reigning with Him. So the Lord says "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

We have seen that there is reason to think that the removal of true believers at the Rapture of the Church will make very little difference to the professing church. Indeed, things may even seem to improve, as there will no longer be voices raised in protest against increasing worldliness, and no longer any obstacle to the union of all shades of belief (or rather, opinion). Just as the parts of scripture which do not fit human ideas are being explained away, so there will then be found little difficulty in overcoming scruples of conscience which might otherwise keep the various denominations apart. The dream of the reunion of Christendom will then become a reality. Union with Rome itself will no doubt at last be found possible. Is not all this what we have in the scriptures under the figure of Babylon, the great harlot of Revelation, chapter xvii? For her name means "confusion."

*It is in no way suggested that *this* is the fulfilment of the promise to "sup with" the Lord Jesus. It is now upon earth that He comes in to sup with those who open the door to Him.

“And there came unto me one of the angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me ‘Come hither; I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters’”. The likeness, which is surely a designed one, between this introduction and that of the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, in chapter xxi. verse 9 suggests at once that if one is the true church, then seen in glory, the other is the false.

It is a dreadful thought that what began as the “chaste virgin” (II Cor. xi. 2), separated from the corruptions of the world, and waiting for her Lord from heaven, should now be pictured by this harlot. Yet it is a fact that many of the features shown in Rev. xvii. have characterised papal Rome through the ages. The idolatrous worship of Mary, and of saints and angels (“abominations” in verse 4 means “idols” as always in scripture); the luxury, the grasping at worldly power and influence, the corrupting of men’s minds by her false doctrines, the persecution of the witnesses of Christ, all are pictured here. But in this chapter we see the full development of all this.

It is Rome all right—“that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (verse 18) could fit no other city. The seven hills on which the woman sits are another indication, well-known as a description of Rome’s situation. But the seven hills are the seven heads of the Beast—the revived Roman Empire. The woman is shown sitting upon the Beast, supported by it and at the same time controlling it. This is what the Papacy has always sought, but never managed to achieve. Likewise the *universal* sway over men’s minds—“by thy sorceries were all nations deceived” (Chap. xviii. 23)—will not be true until then.

We have then, a picture of the professing church as having become a corrupt, worldly, idolatrous, persecuting religious system having universal sway. The governments of the nations are in intimate association with this system, and the dividing line between the church and the world, often hard to draw in our own day, will have vanished altogether. Even in that day God will have His witnesses, and Babylon is

active in persecuting them to death, so drawing upon herself the guilt of *all* the persecutions of God's saints.

The judgment of Babylon seems to take place not long before the Lord appears. The Beast and the ten kings which support him have hitherto been upholders of Babylon, but at last turn and destroy her, enriching themselves at her expense. They "burn her with fire," destroying the widespread ramifications of that evil system root and branch. This is what Revelation xvii. records.

Chapter xviii, describing judgment more directly at the hands of God, has sometimes been thought to show the literal destruction of the city of Rome, say by an earthquake, following the judgment of the previous chapter. But on the whole it is more probable that chapter xviii. describes the effect of the judgment of chapter xvii.

If we have correctly interpreted the teaching of scripture regarding Babylon, it is a corruption and debasement of Christianity. But we also read of the apostasy, which is nothing less than the abandonment of Christianity entirely. This is linked with the appearance of the Man of Sin, or the Antichrist, in II Thess. ii. 3, 4. In the Authorised Version it is given as "a falling away," but the more definite "the apostasy" is the true meaning.

The Antichrist "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." The same personage is no doubt described in Revelation xiii. in the second beast of verse 11, causing all men to worship the first beast introduced in verse 1.

These apparently opposed characters of exalting himself above all, and exalting the first beast, may easily be reconciled; we are here only concerned with the connection between his rise and the down-fall of Babylon. Scripture does not reveal the connection, and the worship of the beast continues alongside the Babylonish system for a time. Then the beast and the ten kings, chafing perhaps at the influence which Babylon exerts, turn and destroy her. There is then only one religious system (if religious it can be called) and that is the worship of the beast and his image. That is, the

worship of Man and through him of Satan who gave him power (Rev. xiii. 4).

The means by which this worship is established are two-fold. First, the Antichrist, empowered by Satan, performs great wonders in the sight of men, as both Rev. xiii and II Thess. ii. describe. Men who profess to find the Gospel incredible will be persuaded by the "strong delusion." It is allowed by God as a judgment on their "pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. ii. 12). In contrast to the Gospel which humbles man and calls on him to repent, this religion will exalt man.

The second method by which submission to the beast will be enforced is that of persecution. Death is the penalty for those who refuse to worship the image of the beast, and this submission to the Satanic system is maintained by a complete ban on buying and selling for all who seek to stand out. We can well imagine their suffering. Nevertheless Scripture makes it clear that God will have His witnesses, faithful ones among Jews and Gentiles. "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8).

If the apostasy is the final abandonment of Christianity in any form, and is introduced by *the* Antichrist, the Bible nevertheless makes it clear that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (II Thess. ii. 7) and that "even now are there many antichrists" (I John ii. 18). Fundamental tenets of the "faith once delivered to the saints" are being denied all around us in modernistic teachings, and on the other hand, sects which profess to revere the Bible are denying our blessed Lord and the need for His atoning work. Babylon meanwhile boasts that she alone holds the true faith! As God has graciously revealed what is to be the end of it all, may we be enabled to continue in simple faith, keeping Christ's word, and not denying His Name.

BEING OF ONE MIND

Read Philipians i. 1-11; ii. 1-11 and iv. 1-9.

(Notes of an address given at Broadstairs, 28/6/58.)

An assembly should be a spiritual home. The Lord's people need such, and are usually attracted first by their hearts, rather than by their heads. If we want to gain others therefore, we must make sure that our assembly is a spiritual home as well as being the "pillar and ground of the truth."

There may be a well appointed house, and a household, but if it be divided it is not a home. Surely the home at Bethany was a united one; same thoughts, love in action. We need fellowship one with another. Everything may be correct and orthodox, but cold as an iceberg; no attraction to those principles we hold and value.

In Corinthians we are instructed as to church order, and the direction is given that everything must be done decently and in order, etc. In Philipians we are told how to carry these things out in a loving and gracious way.

The epistle was written about ten years after Paul's first visit. As we know, much can happen in that time! Philippi was a Roman colony, a kind of little Rome, not like Thessalonica or Corinth, which were Greek cities and administered as such. In Acts xvi. we have a beautiful picture of the work of the Lord there; first in Lydia, her heart opening like a flower to the sun; then the slave girl, delivered from demons; lastly the jailer, roused by an earthquake. In this way the work began, and it evidently prospered.

The assembly grew: bishops and deacons were appointed. These Philipians were gospel-minded; they preached it and lived it (Ch. i. 5). Moreover to prayer and fellowship they added the giving of material help for the work of the gospel: they gave to Paul personally, whom they loved (Ch. iv. 16). The assembly at Philippi is an example to us all in the matter of evangelism.

Epaphroditus has visited Paul, who is eager to hear about the assembly at Philippi. Everything was going on well, but there appeared to be just one weakness, a tendency to divide into cliques and groups, and to differ about things. Others

might not have thought this mattered very much, but to the mind and heart of Paul it was serious. See how he stresses "all" throughout this epistle (Ch. i. 4, 7, 8, etc.). The circumstances were not like those at Galatia, where false doctrine was coming in, or at Corinth, where there was disorder of the worst kind. At Philippi it was merely that two godly sisters could not get on together. (Of course, brothers are just as liable to disagree.)

Paul deals with it all so wisely. He does not write them a severe letter of reprimand. First he writes all the good he can about them (and there is much); then in chapter ii. he brings before them the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the entire absence of self-assertion in Him. This part of the epistle is like the most beautiful jewel in a casket of gems. Not until the last chapter does Paul mention the trouble. He lifts all to the highest level first, then "beseeches" the sisters, and asks others to "help those women," and not leave them at variance.

In Chapter ii. 1, Paul refers to "comfort of love," to himself probably, and the beauty of "fellowship of the Spirit." Then in ii. 4, he bids them look upon the things of others (and that not to criticise them), following this with the example of the Lord Jesus. Like Mont Blanc overshadowing the Alps with its beauty, the Lord dominates all with His own perfect example, showing the "mind" that should be in us. We often fail to realise how much we lose of the "comfort of love" and "fellowship of the Spirit" because we fail to have the mind of Christ.

"Of one mind" does not mean being of the same opinion: it is having the same attitude of mind that was in Christ Jesus. We may differ most sincerely in many things that do not touch the fundamental doctrines of our faith, but if there is His lowliness of mind and esteem for others, we shall not assert ourselves and thereby produce friction.

Paul besought Euodias and Syntyche to be of the same mind "in the Lord," Who was the only One who had the perfect right to assert Himself, but did not do so, making Himself of no reputation, humbling Himself. The last Adam is indeed the exact contrast of the first in Eden. F. T. PETTMAN.

DAYBREAK

O Lord, it is Thyself we wait to meet,
To see the heavens open, Thee descend;
Our hearts will glow with rapture Thee to greet,
Thy summoning shout our night of sorrow end.
Archangel's voice . . . the trump of God,
Will echo high
Through all the sky
The heavenly victory!
Then shall we rise to meet Thee, Lord:
Oh come, fulfil Thy promised word.

Thy heavenly voice will penetrate the gloom
The dead in Christ to summon, bid them rise:
Oh, glorious host! triumphant o'er the tomb;
And we caught up with them in glad surprise.
Union in glory . . . fellowship divine,
As from earth's shroud
We take the cloud
With heavenly praises loud!
And in the air Thyself to see;
So shall we ever with Thee be.

FRANK PRICE.

WORDS OF HELP — APRIL 1958 ISSUE

We are still receiving requests for copies of this issue, which was sold out weeks ago. Will any of our readers who have copies to spare kindly send them to the Publisher or the Editor.

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. . . In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” Eccles: xi. 1, 2, 6.

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL NOTE

When you receive WORDS OF HELP, do you put it in your pocket to read during, say, a bus journey, or at some odd moment if and when you have a few minutes to spare? Or do you reserve it deliberately for an hour of leisure, when you are able to read one article at a time thoughtfully, and referring to the scriptures mentioned? It is surprising how much the profit to be gained from what is read depends upon the condition of the reader's mind at the time of reading!

If the Editor may be permitted to give his experience, how often an article which seemed unattractive during a preliminary and cursory reading has proved to be of real interest and deep spiritual value when given more thorough consideration. (In this connection let it be understood that no article is rejected until it *has* received most careful consideration, and, in case of doubt in the Editor's mind, has been submitted to at least one other person for a second opinion.)

Each article that appears in WORDS OF HELP is the outcome of someone's thought and labour, and we ask our readers to give the written ministry of others the same earnest and courteous consideration that they would desire for their own. In this way both writer and readers may be united in their enjoyment of the many good things which the Lord gives so bountifully for the edification and spiritual refreshment of His people.

May we remind our readers also that we are always delighted to receive messages of appreciation to pass on to those who have been used of the Lord to write a piece which has proved to be particularly helpful.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians ii. 4).

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS XVII. IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

(Luke xxii. 19)

(Gleanings from an address given at Wildfell Hall, Catford,
London, 3/5/58)

THE gospel by Luke gives us, as no other does, the institution of the supper, and the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in connection with His death. There is no indication of continuity in either Matthew's record or Mark's. In Luke there is the thought of the great Giver—"This is *My body* which is *given* for you . . . this cup is the new covenant in *My blood* which is *shed* for you."

Paul gives the same thought in his first epistle to the Corinthian assembly (Ch. xi. 23-26). He gives it by divine revelation, thus opening wide the door of invitation to all Gentile believers to take the supper of remembrance. For "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." This is not an historical remembrance of one known in the flesh: neither Luke nor Paul had seen the Lord. And it is given to Peter to write in his first epistle (Ch. i. 8) "Whom having not seen, ye love." Thus we find our link with saints of the past, and are assured of our welcome to the supper of remembrance. For we love Him, and it is His abiding love that makes it possible for us to come together in this way.

Let us look at the setting for the occasion of the institution of the supper of remembrance. The last passover was ended. The first supper was about to be celebrated by the only One who could fulfil the type of the lamb slain. Israel as a nation could no longer be distinguished. It was scattered as the outcome of departure from the One who had redeemed it out of slavery. Yet there was a pathetic attempt each year to make a show of national continuity. At the time of the passover, Jews from all over the Mediterranean area began to move eastward toward Jerusalem. At cost of time, energy and money they made their journeys "going up to the feast." Gathered in the remnants of their families, they ate the

passover; some in godly fear, others in futile attempt to support a nationalism which had long ceased to be a reality.

At this time of gathering it had become a custom with them to remember their dead. In Hosea ix. 4 we have the expression "the bread of mourners" which was eaten, and Jeremiah speaks of "The cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother" (Ch. xvi. 7). In His wonderful grace the Lord Jesus descends to this familiar custom, and gives it a new significance. It was His own thought in love for them. How deliberately He takes the bread: there is no tremor in the hands that break it! There is no display; no heroics. It is a calm and purposeful giving of His body in love for them. The hands, so soon to know the piercing of the nails of crucifixion, pass to the disciples the broken loaf for which *He had given thanks*: "This is *My* body which is given for *you*: this do in remembrance of Me."

What is our response as we look back upon this scene? The answering love of the individual is not unexpected, but what most answers to His love is the affection of His assembly expressed as a body. How He looks for that *bridal* affection, though it can only be a shadow of the mutual joy of those heavenly nuptials in which, by His grace, we shall have part!

So did He take the simple homely loaf of bread, which men have called the staff of life, to represent His own prepared body—a Divine Person in manhood. On previous occasions He had used a loaf in their presence. He drew their thoughts to Himself as the great Source of Supply. He used five loaves for the feeding of the first multitude. Dependence, expressed in the five loaves blessed and broken and given, fully satisfied five thousand. He used seven loaves to feed the second multitude. The Divine Source of Supply was still undiminished, unailing. In Mark viii. 14, the little family is in a ship, and they have only one loaf between them. The disciples are discomfited. But again He brings before them Himself—the unailing Source of Supply, reminding them of the multitudes filled. He is, Himself, all they need—the true Bread from heaven. The one loaf, inadequate to the undiscerning, is the precious symbol of Himself and of their unity with Him.

The Supper is not an ordinance. Men have surrounded it with ecclesiastical ceremony. We must show grace and patience to many who, though believers, speak of "taking communion" or "going to communion." The Supper should minister to the satisfaction of the Lord Jesus. He looks to His assembly for that bridal affection which is the spiritual response to His act of giving Himself in death for the bringing to Himself of those He loves. "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered Himself up for it, in order that He might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that *He* might present the assembly to Himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless" (Eph. v. 25-27: New Tr.).

"In remembrance of Me"—it is an united act. We "come together" for it. The brother who breaks the bread performs an humble act of service for all. The Lord Himself said "I am among you as one that serves."

The taking of the cup follows. But the significance of the emblem never falters—rather is there an increase in the impulse of appreciation of the One who gave His body and shed His blood. In many places in scripture there is a sense of progression in worship. In 2 Chron. ix. the queen of Sheba was astounded at the wisdom and the wealth of Solomon, but it is when she "saw his *ascent* by which he *went up* into the house of the Lord" that she is humbled and becomes a worshipper. "Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on His throne, to be king for the LORD thy God" (verse 8).

This is not a passover cup. Luke alone makes this very clear. It is a cup of remembrance—remembrance of a Mediator. In Luke the Lord is Mediator of a New Covenant in His own blood. In Exodus xxiv., Moses, as mediator, sprinkled the blood upon altar, book and people. He said "Behold the blood of the covenant." With the elders of Israel he *went up* before the presence of God, and God "laid not His hand" upon them, that is, they entered the presence of God and were not judged for their unfitness! It was the blood of this

covenant that made such a thing possible, and that made available to them the precious and intricate details of the Tabernacle. The purpose of Divine love was the same then as in the upper room long after. "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. xxv. 8). So would the Lord find sanctuary in the midst of His assembly—so would He dwell among them!

That which we eat and drink becomes part of us. To be content with the mere *act* of taking the supper is to give nothing to the One who desires to be remembered. It is only as we enter into the value of Himself in His mediatorial giving that we minister to Him. He looks for our love. Knowledge of Him deepens as we become occupied with Him in this way, and the taking of the supper becomes a living reality and a means of spiritual growth.

EDWARD T. WOOD.

TREASURES OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

Read: I Kings xiv. 25-28.

(Compiled from notes of an address given at Wildfell Hall, Catford, London on Saturday 7/6/58.)

THESSE verses have been chosen to introduce the subject of the spiritual treasures which the Lord Jesus has given to His church, and the need there is to safeguard them against the efforts of Satan to deprive His people of them.

The house of the Lord which Solomon had established so gloriously in Jerusalem was now in the guardianship of his weak and unworthy son Rehoboam, and Shishak, king of Egypt, had come up against Jerusalem. It will be remembered that Egypt was the land from which God's people had been redeemed, so that in fact an old foe was seeking to reassert himself.

Sad to say Rehoboam and his people were not strong enough to resist the enemy, with the result that Shishak robbed them in a threefold way. He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord; he took away the treasures of the king's house;

and he took away the shields of gold which Solomon had provided for protective purposes, replacing them with counterfeit brazen shields.

The first of these spoilations was the removal of the treasures of the Lord's house, treasures which were the prized possessions of the nation collectively. And the incident is designed to serve as a warning to the people of God today that Satan will rob us of our peculiar treasures if we are not vigilant to guard them against both the violence and the wiles that he will employ.

Let us consider some of the treasures which Christ Himself has given to His church for whom He gave Himself. There are of course a great many of which Satan is powerless to rob us, but there are others entrusted to the people of God which they may easily lose.

First of all let us remember the unspeakable blessing of the Lord's own presence in the midst of His people when they are gathered to His Name (Matt. xviii. 20). This is a truth distinctive of the present dispensation, the denial of which opens the door to much that is evil.

It is a simple faith in the *fact* that the Lord is present in the midst of those gathered to His Name, that we stand in such great need of today. Forgetfulness of this deprives our souls of the rich blessings the Lord intends us to receive. If His presence were manifest to our senses, as it was to the disciples' when He was here on earth, how overwhelmed our hearts would be! What profound calm there would be in the assembly! What respectful attention to Him would be the result! There would be an entire absence of precipitate action or rivalry. But should the influence of the Lord's presence be less because it is a question of faith and not of sight? Is Christ less really present because He is invisible to the natural eye? His own positive word forbids us to think so. It is in the requirement of faith that we are so sorely lacking.

And yet, can we not all recall many occasions when the presence of the Lord in the midst has been realised as a fact. How blessed the experience has been! What outpouring of

heart to Him! And how were the intervals of silence employed? Not in agitation as to who should pray next, or who should speak; not in turning over the leaves of Bible or Hymn book to find something suitable to read or to sing. No, each heart had been meditating upon Himself, and when the silence came to be broken, it was by prayer which gathered up the thoughts and aspirations of all present, or by a hymn in which all could join with unity of heart as well as voice! Or if a word of ministry was given, it was a word which came with power to every heart!

This brings us to the second distinctive blessing of the church era—the presence of the Holy Ghost to direct in the assembly. Although a number of brethren may take part audibly, it is the one Spirit who works in all, dividing to every man severally as He will (I Cor. xii. 11).

The presence and action of the Holy Spirit is not to be confounded with the personal presence of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit was given to administer and direct in the church, but His gracious purpose is to glorify Christ (John xvi. 14), and the thoughts of all present in the assembly should be directed to Christ rather than to the presence of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand it must always be borne in mind that we cannot realise the presence of the Lord apart from the sovereign enabling of the Holy Spirit.

There is a further distinction between the presence of the Lord and that of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's presence is realised only where two or three are *gathered to His Name*. He can only be where His full authority is recognised. In regard to the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus assured His disciples that the Comforter would *dwell* with them and be *in* them. Nevertheless His gracious activity in the assembly may be hindered by the refusal to acknowledge His administration, though His presence is not withdrawn. What a loss of blessing that must entail! We need to ask ourselves whether we are allowing Shishak king of Egypt to rob us of this treasure of the house of the Lord.

But there is a further treasure which the Lord in His grace has bestowed on His church, viz:—spiritual gifts for the work

of the ministry (see Eph. iv. 11-13 and I Cor. xii. 28). And the power for the exercise of gift is that of the Spirit (I Cor. xii. 4-11).

In the present democratic day there is a widespread view that in the assembly every brother has a right to speak. Surely this is a serious fallacy. A man may have by natural endowment the faculty of speaking, so that he is able to speak well. But in the assembly, such an one may speak only if by the power of the Holy Spirit he can do so to the edification and comfort of the saints (I Cor. xiv.). Otherwise he dishonours the Head of the church, hinders the Spirit, and is guilty of selfwill.

Furthermore, the power to edify is *not* given to all. The Holy Spirit bestows gifts as He pleases. Please read I Cor. xii. 29, 30, where the apostle says: "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" There would be no meaning in these questions if it were not to make clear that such places are filled by the few who are gifted by divine endowment. The apostle had declared previously that "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers etc." (ver.28). So that in the selfsame scripture which treats in the greatest detail of the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the distribution and exercise of the gifts in the body, in this very same portion that establishes the liberty of the ministry which is of God for the building up and nourishment of the church, it is laid down that not all brethren are gifted of the Holy Spirit in the same way. Some have one gift, some another; and all gifts are from God. So that no man needs the sanction of the church to exercise his gift. On the other hand, what God has given He will duly accredit, and the whole church should acknowledge its value.

The question has been raised whether in the absence of some of the gifts mentioned in Eph. iv., and I Cor. xii. and xiv., for example, apostles, prophets, healing, tongues, the principles laid down in these chapters for the exercising of gift still apply. But why not? Why are these instructions

preserved for us in the Scriptures if they may be ignored? And if we disregard *these* chapters, what other part of scripture gives us the guidance we need? No reasonable doubt surely can be sustained that it is by living men, gifted and called for the ministry and service of the church, that Christ takes care of His church; feeding it, nourishing it, through the ever gracious activity of the Holy Spirit. The gifts, the men, which Christ gives constitute His provision for the bringing in of souls to build up the church from without, and for the edification of His people within, and the true wisdom of the saints is to discern these gifts where Christ has put them. To acknowledge such is to acknowledge Christ the Head. To refuse to acknowledge them, claiming equality of right to minister for all, is to dishonour the Head and to injure ourselves.

It follows from these scriptures that Christ's gifts are to His whole body, not merely to particular local gatherings. If in any particular assembly no such gifts are manifest, then let the saints confess their poverty and supplicate the Head of the Church to supply the need. It must not be thought that the action of any man in assuming a position of gift can be adequate substitute for the real gift of Christ. No man becomes a "gift" by his own appointment. All gift is bestowed by the power of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. xii. 4-11).

But there is one further consequence of this which merits consideration. The question is frequently raised: If the Head of the church gives gifts to His church, how is it that we see so little effective result in the preaching to the lost and in ministry to the saints?

In agreeing that this may be the case, however, we must in no way attribute the cause to what the Lord has given, but rather to the lack of submission there is in practice to what the Lord has ordained. We complain of the fewness of "gifts." But may the fault not be that we fail to discern those who are given? We believe Christ still gives gifts to His church, and that we should receive such with joy, rejoicing in the gift of the evangelist who gathers in the lost, giving thanks for the pastor who shepherds Christ's flock, and receiving gladly the helpful instruction of the teacher.

Nor should we neglect the ministry of "gifts" who are no longer with us in the flesh. We gladly receive the word of the apostles which has been preserved by God for us in the inspired record. And whilst we recognise that their word, having the specific sanction of the Spirit of God, is therefore authoritative, may we not also value the written ministry of men of God of former years which is to be found in the books handed down from one generation to another?

May our readers value every treasure given to the house of the Lord, and refuse to exchange what is of God for any human counterfeit!

C. A. CLARK.

RESULTS OF NEARNESS TO CHRIST

(Read: John xiii. 23; xix. 26; xx. 2; xxi. 7 and 20)

FIVE times in the gospel he wrote John describes himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It was lowliness of mind which made him prefer this reference to Jesus' love for himself rather than to the deep affection he undoubtedly had for his Lord. Let us consider what results may follow living near to the Lord as John did.

I. We Shall Learn His Mind

In the first scripture "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved," the lesson is that John occupied a position of nearness to Christ in which, as Peter recognised, he was well placed to ask the Lord the meaning of His saying "One of you shall betray Me." To be near the Lord for His own sake, and, having understood His mind, to be able to communicate it to others, is something all should covet.

In a great, important and vital sense, all believers are in the same position of nearness, "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13). Yet, as it was in the apostolic band, so among believers now, there is such a thing as having the head on Jesus' bosom, so as to know the secrets of His heart. As regards their "standing" before God all believers are alike; as to spiritual "state," probably no two are the same. Our

earnest desire should be that our "state" should be in conformity with our "standing."

II. We Shall Enjoy His Confidence

In the second passage (xix. 26) we note that the Lord Himself marks John out as one in whom He had confidence. He was now crucified, and seeing "His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved," He gave commandment concerning them, with the result that John took the mother of Jesus to his own home. This was a high honour for John, and we may be certain that the Lord's confidence in him was not misplaced.

That John was true to his trust may be seen in Acts i. 14, where, at one of the most important gatherings ever held, Mary was present; also Jesus' brethren. May we not conclude that it was John who saw to it that she was there? The Lord Jesus was now in heaven, but the gathering was assuredly in His Name; and she who loved Him would delight to be there, recalling probably His own declaration that He would be in the midst of His disciples when so assembled (Matt. xviii. 20).

III. We Shall Follow His Example.

The third reference (xx. 2) is to the scene at the tomb from which the Lord had risen. Mary Magdalene was there early, and "she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved" with the message about the empty tomb, the full import of which she did not yet know.

In the narrative, the last mention of Peter was when he was in the act of denying that he was Jesus' disciple. We do not read of his being at the Cross: possibly he was alone weeping out the repentance induced by the look of His gracious Master, feeling that his place in the apostolic band must be forfeited for ever! If that was so, may we not believe that John sought him out, to console him, and to continue the work of restoration begun by the Lord's look, and completed by the side of that other "fire of coals" at which he would warm himself and be welcome; where his hunger would be

satisfied and he would have better company than those who were around the "fire of coals" in the High Priest's palace (see John xviii. 18). Such a brotherly action on John's part would be entirely consistent with his having learned the significance of the Lord's action only a few hours previously when He washed His disciples' feet (John xiii.), and His subsequent command to them to follow His example, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

IV. We Shall Discern His Presence

Turning to chapter xxi. 7, we find our two friends with five others returned to their former vocation. Again John is referred to as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." On this occasion we observe another trait in his character, that of "discernment."

The Master stood on the shore. He it was who had given the command to "cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." The miraculous draught of fishes which followed was apparently absorbing the attention of the others, but John's mind was at work. He recalled the similar miracle wrought earlier on, at the time of their first call to discipleship, and his quick discernment led him to exclaim to Peter "It is the Lord." From that moment all went well: the weary fishermen were soon warmed and fed, dining lavishly at the open air table of the Lord of all creation. Erring Simon was fully restored, being thereby fitted, and indeed instructed, to feed the lambs and sheep of the flock for which Christ died.

V. We Shall Watch For His Return.

Still as "the disciple whom Jesus loved . . . which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee" (ver. 20) John is now seen "following" the Lord. Peter too is there, fully restored, but concerned as to John's future, his own having been clearly defined. The conclusion of this is seen in verse 22, where Peter receives the emphatic injunction "Follow thou Me," something which

John was already doing. And the Lord uses the occasion to remind them of His coming again (ver. 22).

Maybe John's close following of his Master accounts for his being chosen to write the fourth gospel, his three epistles, and the vision of Revelation. His discerning mind perceived the glories of the Person of Christ both as they were displayed during His life on earth, and as they will shine forth in days to come. Though banished to the isle of Patmos, he still occupied the place of nearness to the One whom he loved, and was ready to serve the churches as a "brother, and companion in tribulation" (Rev. i. 9). Peter, too, never forgot his commission to "Feed My lambs . . . feed My sheep" (cf. I Peter v. 2-4).

Not all believers have so rich an experience as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." But may we, who are Christ's disciples in days perhaps immediately prior to His return, covet to be "near Him" continually, so that with a deeper knowledge of His mind, and enjoying His confidence, we may "raise the fallen, cheer the faint," and, discerning His present ways, be those who watch for His return.

P. WHITE.

Notice of Book

Two Lectures on Ezra & Nehemiah

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The Publisher (C. A. Hammond) is to be congratulated on the reproduction of this book, concerning which the late W. J. Hocking, in his preface to the second edition, writes:—

"The two histories record the mingled faithfulness and failure of the repatriated Jews while seeking to restore in Jerusalem the temple-worship of Jehovah and the daily life of the people according to the law of Moses. These historical facts have an evident analogy with present-day efforts on a similarly restricted scale to conform in worship and walk to New Testament church order. Hence the successes and defeats of the past provide both encouragement and warning for the present. The lecturer calls special attention to these useful features in the course of his two addresses."

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION. Would you please explain the statement of the husbandmen in the parable of Matt. xxi. 33-39 "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance," whereas in Acts iii. 17 Peter tells the Jews that "through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

D. T. GIRARD (Guernsey, C. I.)

ANSWER. I suggest we must draw a distinction between a parable and historical fact. The Lord was setting out, to the people and indirectly to the chief priests and Pharisees (see ver. 45), a word picture for their consideration. He does not say that either the people or their leaders recognised the messenger as the son and heir, any more than He says that God the Father had gone into a far country. The immediately following verses in each of the three gospels bear this out, because it is usually understood, and in my judgment implied, that the builders *failed to recognise* in the rejected stone the chief (or head) corner stone which was the key-stone of the whole building.

At the same time the priests and Pharisees recognised that both these—the parable and the quotation from the Old Testament—were spoken of them, without accepting their relevance. Consequently Peter could say "through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

J. C. KELL.

The following extract from "Exposition of the Acts" by W. K., may also be helpful—"In one way this (i.e. their ignorance) might aggravate the degraded condition of Gods' ancient people; for how came they and their rulers to be so ignorant? They knew neither the scripture nor the power of God. They valued neither grace nor truth. They saw works, they heard words, such as men never experienced before; yet they were more besotted than heathen, duller than their own beasts of burden (See Isaiah i.). But He who suffered for them on the cross prayed to His Father to forgive them, for they knew not what they did; and now the Holy Spirit through the apostle assures them that so it was, as a plea for divine compassion." Compare also I Timothy i. 13. *Editor*

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

As 1958 draws to its close, we must, as ever, acknowledge the goodness of God that has permitted us to issue WORDS OF HELP without interruption during another year, in service to the Lord. For help given and help received through the ministry of the Magazine, let thanks be accorded to the divine Giver of all that is good.

In a world full of change and corruption, how privileged the redeemed of the Lord are to have for their guidance and comfort the incorruptible "word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"! No effort of Satan through the centuries to destroy the Scriptures has been allowed to succeed. Nor will the enemy ever prevail: for our Lord Himself has declared "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

WORDS OF HELP seeks to engage the mind and heart (even the conscience) of the believer with the deep and holy things of God, communicated in the scriptures "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Reverent submission to the Holy Spirit is therefore essential for the reception and understanding of the truth. May all our readers be enabled thus to receive divine enlightenment, and so become established in their most holy faith.

Lord, Thy Word abideth,
And our footsteps guideth;
Who its truth believeth
Light and joy receiveth.

Oh, that we discerning
Its most holy learning,
Lord, may love and fear Thee,
Evermore be near Thee.

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

(Jeremiah xv. 16)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XVIII. FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH

Read: Genesis xlv., and Heb. x. 22.

THESSE two scriptures are linked together by the circumstance that in Genesis xlv. Joseph invites *his* repentant, but now reconciled brothers to come near to *him*, whilst in Hebrews x, believers are encouraged to draw near to God, the One to whom *they* have become reconciled by the death of His Son. In each case the exercise of faith is called for, this being implied in Genesis, whereas the requirement is specifically mentioned in Hebrews.

It is one of the great privileges secured for believers during the present dispensation of grace that they have access to the throne of God at all times for worship, prayer and supplication. By the precious blood of Christ a new and living way has been opened into the holiest of all, both for individuals and for the people of God on earth collectively. So that the writer to the Hebrews can confidently bid his readers "draw near . . . in full assurance of faith." The story of Joseph and his brothers will illustrate the matters in respect of which faith has to be exercised.

Faith in the Person of Christ

When, after his brethren were manifestly repentant for their great sin of years before, Joseph decided the time had come to make himself known to them, he bade them "come near." As might be expected this invitation proved embarrassing. Clearly, before they could respond, they would need to be convinced that it was in very truth their own brother Joseph who was there before them.

How staggering Joseph's blunt announcement must have been! "I am Joseph, your brother. Doth my father yet live?" Though the brothers had been ill-at-ease in the presence of this unusual personage, whose treatment of them had been so bewildering, there is no syllable to suggest any such idea had crossed their minds as that he might be their own long-lost brother. Little wonder therefore that they stood before him confused and speechless.

But in very truth it *was* Joseph, slow though they might be to recognise him. He speaks too of his father, and of his kinship with them. It was as one sent by his father to seek their welfare that the guilty men had last known and handled Joseph. Earlier still they had hated him, not only because of their father's demonstration of special love for him, but because of Joseph's own dreams of supremacy. Could it be that these night visions of long ago had already been fulfilled, when, without realising what they were doing, they bowed themselves to the earth before their younger brother? Yet so it was.

Beloved readers! When we gather together on the morning of the first day of the week for the breaking of bread, do we believe that there is present in our midst the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father, albeit the Son of Man who once was nailed to the cross of Calvary? Is it Himself who is present, or are we allowing our imagination to run away with us when we think so?

Matthew xviii. 20 supplies the emphatic answer to such questions as these. The requirement on our part is *faith*, full assurance of *faith* to accept our Lord's presence in the midst as a fact because He has declared it to be so.

Joseph's facial features may well have been so completely changed by his sufferings that not even his younger brother Benjamin could identify him with the natural eye. As we gather around the bread and wine we discern by faith the presence of Him whose "visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isa. lii. 14). Well may we fall at His feet in adoration and thanksgiving!

Faith in the Pardon of Christ

If the realisation that they were in the presence of Joseph proved staggering to his brothers, how overwhelming must have been their sense of guilt! The uneasiness of recent months and weeks which had culminated in their saying one to another "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us"; and later "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants," now gave place to the fear that they might experience the full retribution

of the one whom they had wronged. What else could they expect but the unbridled vengeance of the one to whose power they now found themselves exposed? How terrified they must have been!

But listen! What is this that Joseph is saying? "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life . . . so now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." How full of music those words must have been to their souls! But were they true? Could they be relied upon? Did Joseph mean what he said? Indeed he did. And the one thing required of his brothers was that they should believe him. His words of pardon would be full of comfort provided they were received with "full assurance of faith."

No sweeter words fall upon human ears today than those which convey to penitent and believing sinners God's forgiveness. How wonderful to know that one is "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"! Well may the believer sing in holy exultation:

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear.

Satan will endeavour to shake the believer's confidence, especially in moments when he is overwhelmed with the sense of his own weakness and failure. It is at such times therefore that "full assurance of faith" is most needed, in order to defeat the accusations and insinuations of a relentless enemy.

How tactfully Joseph sought to allay his brothers fears! He turned their thoughts away from themselves to God: "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (ver. 8). And how successful the strategy was! It broke down the barrier between them, and Joseph is found weeping on his brothers' necks for very joy.

Years ago one used not infrequently to come across persons so sensitive as to their own unworthiness that they could not bring themselves to partake of the Lord's supper in the appointed way. A little more self-judgment of that kind might

prove wholesome today! Yet the grace of God must not be doubted since it rests upon the solid foundation of Christ's personal merit. Let a man indeed examine himself—to be sure that he partakes of the bread and wine in a worthy manner, with a duly chastened spirit—"and so let him eat," *not* refrain from eating, in full assurance of faith that he is accepted in God's Beloved. Let the eye be turned away from self to Christ, and a believer will overcome his own doubts and the devil.

Faith in the Power of Christ

With five years of world-wide famine to come, and all available stocks of corn concentrated in the granaries of Egypt, how dependent the brothers were going to be upon Joseph henceforth! Indeed, Joseph himself invites them to entrust themselves wholly to his care, promising to supply their needs, and offering them the best of the land for themselves and their herds to dwell in. How comforting his promise to provide for them must have been! But would Joseph have the resources to perform his word? This called for their "full assurance of faith" in his power.

What an amazing story Joseph's was! Betrayed by his brothers, falsely accused, imprisoned without prospect of release, his only hope dashed to the ground when one upon whom he relied forgot him! Yet in the space of a few hours, through the intervention of God, lifted from the dungeon and seated upon a throne from which he exercised power to the ends of the earth! All this was solid fact, not fiction.

Beloved friends! we cannot linger for ever around the table of the Lord, sweet though it might be to do so. The stern duties of life call us away to live and to witness for Him in a hostile world. Can we go forth with "full assurance of faith" that the Lord will supply all needed grace and strength for whatever may lie ahead? Let us listen once again to His own words, spoken immediately before His ascension to heaven: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

If Joseph's brothers were slow to believe, what shall be said of Jacob? The words of his sons were an idle tale to him, for the old man found it difficult to forget the past. It was not until he saw the wagons which Joseph had so thoughtfully

sent to fetch him down to Egypt that his spirit revived (ver. 27). With this evidence before his eyes he realised that Joseph had foreseen his need as a weak old man, and had provided all that was necessary for his safe journey to Goshen. "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

On the expiry of a due interval after the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead and returned to heaven, the promised Power was sent down, a witness to the pre-eminence of His station at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The Holy Spirit came down to be the strength and guide of the Lord's people on earth. Let every believer exercise "full assurance of faith" as to this, and step forth boldly on the pathway that will lead him to the place where he will know neither want nor care.

E. A. PETTMAN.



ISRAEL—THE NATION OF GOD'S PURPOSE

IN the purposes of God for this earth, Israel has always held a prominent place. It was in Israel that God's kingdom was established under David and Solomon (I Chron. xxviii, 5), but this, being committed to man, very quickly ended in failure. However, it became a type of that future glorious kingdom under the Second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of Him the angel Gabriel announced to Mary "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Now many scriptures declare that the kingdom of the Lord Jesus will be world-wide (we are speaking now only of the earth.) For instance Psalm lxxii, 8 declares "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth;" and again in verse 11 "Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him all nations shall serve Him." But He is to reign over the *house of Jacob*, so that Israel is to be the centre of that glorious kingdom of our Lord. Then shall many nations come and say "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and

He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Micah iv, 2).

What of the people of whom such a glorious future is foretold? God has called them "Lo-ammi—not My people," and their present condition is an abiding memorial to the truth of the divine word, which declared of them "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim" (Hosea iii, 4). That is, without a true king, who must be of the lineage of David; without a prince who *could* become king, for none of them knows his descent; without a sacrifice to God, and without an idol to false gods; without an ephod, by which God's will was in times past declared, and without the oracles of false gods. This was their state when the Lord Jesus came to them, and they refused the only One who could deliver them. Yet just as the evil that Jacob's sons did to Joseph was the means God used for their deliverance in time of famine, so was Israel's rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah used of God to lay the foundation for their future blessing.

"God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" declares Paul in Romans xi, 2, arguing first from the fact of God's mercy to himself, high-handed persecutor of the Church as he had been; then from God's declaration to Elijah that, at that time of seemingly complete apostasy, there were still 7,000 of Israel who had not bowed to Baal. So he concludes that "at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Now "At this present time"—whether Paul's or ours—the believing remnant of Israel becomes part of the Church, in which there is neither "Greek nor Jew . . . but Christ is all, and in all." And this will continue until the Church, with believers of previous dispensations, is caught up to be for ever with the Lord. For the same 11th chapter of Romans (the whole of which needs to be studied carefully to understand this subject) makes clear that Israel's rejection of Christ is not to continue for ever. Just as the setting aside of Israel

as the object of God's counsels made room for the Church, whose calling is heavenly; so the rapture of the Church will make room for the restoration of Israel. Not that this restoration can follow at once—Israel must first receive from God's hands double for all her sins (Isaiah xl, 2). All the sufferings at the hands of the nations that the Jews have undergone have never wrought in them repentance for the sin of Calvary, though some of them now speak of it as a great mistake. The greater part of them are either indifferent to God and sunk in worldliness, or imbued with nationalistic unbelief.

In this connection it is necessary to record the writer's belief that the view that the tribe of Judah alone was responsible for crucifying the Lord is without scriptural foundation, although many revered men have taught this. The "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (Acts ii, 5) which were gathered at Jerusalem at Pentecost were no doubt a similar company to those gathered at the Passover when the crucifixion took place.

Peter charges them with having crucified the Lord Jesus, ending up his address with the words "Therefore let all *the house of Israel* know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." James also writes to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad"; Paul speaks of "our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night." These expressions must not be weakened from their true force by saying that the speakers' faith envisaged the whole twelve tribes, whereas in fact ten of them were "lost among the nations." Indeed, the Lord when He sent out His twelve apostles commanded them to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—not of Judah merely. Spiritually they were lost, not in any other sense.

The revival of nationalism among the Jews, their setting up of a state called "Israel" in part of the Promised Land, only shows how far gone they are from God's thoughts. For all the scriptures which prophesy a restoration to the land that God gave them, speak of it as Jehovah's work, and of the people being marked by repentance and self-judgment—see for example Ezek. xxxvii, 23-28. But no sign of this repentance

is yet apparent, and the spirit of nationalism is at root the same as that which led them to crucify the Lord—see John xi, 47-50.

The nation then is still “Not My people,” and God’s account with them is still not settled. He says that they shall not come out of prison till they have paid the very last mite (Luke xii, 58, 59). So the greatest sufferings of Israel are still future, when they will pass through “the great tribulation.” It would seem that when the Church has been taken to heaven, God’s dealings with Israel will result once again in the separation of a godly remnant. This remnant will become the nucleus of a new generation of Israel who will inherit all the promises of earthly blessing. “The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob” (Isa. lix, 20). But the greater part of the nation, still unbelieving, will accept Antichrist though they refused the Christ of God (John v. 43), and will perish under divine judgment.

The “sealing” or marking out as God’s, of this remnant is given us in Rev. vii. There 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel are sealed. The number is undoubtedly a symbolic one, not literal. The Beast will later seal or mark in their foreheads or right hands those that submit to him. Before this takes place, God marks out *His* servants. Before He pours out judgment on the world and on apostate Israel, He marks off the elect and faithful remnant.

Where are the remnant to be found? Many, undoubtedly, in the Holy Land, to whom the Lord’s words of warning in Matthew xxiv. are addressed, to flee when the abomination of desolation is set up. Many also scattered among the nations, for when the Son of Man appears, “He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, to gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

In all the troubles through which they will pass, the remnant will be sustained by the hope of the appearing of the Lord Jesus from heaven. But this hope differs from the Christian hope. *We* look for the Saviour who shall transform us into His own glorious image, and take us to share His heavenly

glory. *They*, on the contrary, look for Him to destroy their ungodly oppressors and set up His kingdom here on earth, and reign *over* them as His people. See for instance Malachi iv.

Moreover, such a characteristic Christian exhortation as that in Col. iii, 2, 3 "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" will not apply to them, looking as they will do, for blessing on the earth. As the prophet foretells "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat of the fruit of them . . . mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isaiah lxxv, 21, 22). But unlike the godly in Israel in Old Testament days, they will know that Christ has already come, and died and risen again. And so many passages of the Old Testament will be plain to them. Isaiah liii seems to represent their hearts' meditation on the Lord's rejection.

The remnant will bear testimony to the Name of Jesus among their unbelieving brethren, and no doubt many will be blest through this. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" says Daniel, referring to this time (xii, 3). Marked by this testimony, and by a faithful adherence to the law of Moses (Mal. iv, 4) they will draw upon themselves the wrath of the Beast, Satan's tool. "The dragon was wroth with the woman (symbolizing Israel), and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. xii, 17).

The direction which the Lord Jesus gave to His apostles as recorded in Matthew x, to go and preach the Kingdom message among "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" was apparently fulfilled when they returned and gave Him an account of what they had done (Mark vi, 30). But we cannot read the tenth chapter of Matthew without realizing that it looks on to a *future* testimony, when the messengers would meet with persecution (which the apostles did not in their short mission). Also He says "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, *till the Son of Man be come.*" This unmistakable indication of a future fulfilment to words that had a partial

fulfilment then, leads us to expect the same thing elsewhere, and especially in chapter xxiv. of the same Gospel.

There, we have reference to another testimony, not this time to Israel, but to the nations. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall *the end* come" (Matt. xxiv, 14). Who the preachers are is not stated, but from what we have seen above the probability is that the remnant, or some of them, carry out this tremendous work, aided, no doubt, by those of the nations converted through it.

Two things, however, are clear. One is that the preaching of the coming kingdom is distinct from the present-day testimony of the gospel of God's grace—a message in which the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus is only a part, and not the main burden. Secondly, that the proclamation draws on the head of the preachers the hatred of all the nations, verse 9; also Matt. x, 22—another distinction from the present time. in which persecution is sporadic and limited, never universal,

This leads us to one further fact about the remnant. We have seen that they will form the nucleus of the new generation of Israel, and will enter into the blessings of the millennial kingdom of our Lord upon earth. But many will be martyred in the great persecutions of that time, and a higher destiny awaits such. That they will partake in the First Resurrection is explicitly stated in Rev. xx, 4, where three groups of saints are distinguished. There are those already enthroned—raised at the Rapture of the heavenly saints. There are those beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, whose death is first mentioned in Rev. vi, 9-11. Finally there are those who withstood the Beast. Not Jewish saints only, of course, compose these last two groups; but certainly those of the remnant who suffer martyrdom are included. They, like the Church, will reign *with* Christ in heavenly glory.

In this totally inadequate sketch we have tried to show how God's purpose for His earthly people Israel will finally be fulfilled in those who turn to Him in the spiritual darkness that follows the removal of the Church from this world.

Consideration of the actual "restoration of the kingdom to Israel" (Acts i, 6) must be left for a later article, if the Lord will.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.



NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XXXIV—XXXVI

THE government of God in these chapters and throughout the life of Jacob, secures His grace from abuse, and is an essential part of God's dealings with us.

It is hopeful, because God perseveres with us in spite of our failures (cf. Phil. i, 6); helpful, because God's dealings with Jacob exemplify the way He deals with His children today; heart-searching, because God's government is a very real part of His economy.

A permanent principle of God's government (its necessary accompaniment of relationship with Him) is illustrated in Amos iii, 1, 2 and I Peter i, 17.

God is the moral governor of the world; also of His own household. Jacob, as David later on, had private and public experiences of God's government.

Chapter xxxiv, vv. 1-31. These shocking events resulted from Jacob's pitching his tent before Shechem, exposing his family to the temptations of an idolatrous city.

Jacob's fear (v. 30) that the inhabitants of the land would avenge his sons' cruelty and slay himself and his family, shows he had forgotten God's promises. His faith was temporarily eclipsed. Nevertheless God delivered them; His grace never fails.

This was another attempt by Satan to mix up God's people with the people of the land. God, however, intervened, or the identity of the chosen race would have been lost.

Chapter xxxv, v. 1. Jacob is told to return to Bethel. Bethel indicated to the patriarchs the mountain-top of their spiritual experience.

Verses 2-4. Thirty years had elapsed since Jacob's vow (xxviii, 20). The day of his distress had been the day of his good resolutions, but the good impressions then gained seemed to have faded out of his life. Now, however, he awakens to his

responsibility and discerns what befits God's presence. The household gods—obtained maybe from the Shechemites—have to be put away. Holiness becomes the house of God (Ps. xciii, 5 I Peter i, 17).

Jacob's family were also to have clean persons and changed garments. Garments denote our outward habits; the Christian is to exhibit the graces of Christ.

Verse 8. Evidently Rebekah had died, though the fact is not mentioned, no doubt because she typifies the bride of Christ. Her burial is however referred to in xlix, 31. Deborah is only mentioned in connection with Rebekah (xxiv. 59) and at her death. "Rebekah was the heavenly church . . . brought by the Holy Ghost to Christ; Deborah was its earthly Jewish care-taker in infancy—its nurse—what went with, but was not the spouse" (J.N.D. Notes and Comments, i, 227).

Verses 9-15. God graciously reappears to Jacob, to confirm his new name, and to enlarge His promises. Only now that he has arrived at Bethel is he finally settled in the line of promise.

It is not said that Jacob dwelt *at* Bethel, but "in that land" (v. 22); there he was called Israel. God punished Jacob for leaving Bethel, but His anger does not endure for ever. Jacob is restored, but his troubles persist (cf. David and Absalom). Peter confessed Christ to be the Son of the living God, but later denied that he knew Him. But the Lord probed his heart with the thrice-repeated "Lovest thou Me?" and Pentecost follows. So at Bethel Jacob's private pruning and governmental chastening was followed by public confession of God—a pillar. What before was Bethel only to him, is now Bethel to all. God then renames him Israel; not a double account, but the confirmation by an oath.

In xxxii, 29, Jacob asked "Tell me . . . Thy name," but was not told directly that it was God. In xxxv, 11, God told him His name without his asking. In xxviii, 13, Jehovah spoke; now God Almighty (cf. Exodus vi, 2, 3).

Verse 9. God's appearance in this verse seems to be His last personal appearance to the patriarchs. See however, xlvi, 2.

At this climax of Jacob's life he takes the place of repentance where he began. One last trace of Padan-aram (Deborah) disappears. All is well. Hence God appears and blesses him.

For the third time he is given a place in the line of promise. God went up; the solemn matter had been gone into—at Bethel, the place where Jacob proved God.

Verses 16-20. Was Rachel's death the result of leaving Bethel? Or had Jacob still some lingering dread of the place where God appeared? If we walk in holiness we need not fear the house of God: only if we are wilfully going our own way cherishing some unholy object.

Rachel disappears when Benjamin, typifying Christ in exaltation, is born. So Israel were put out of sight for the time being when Christ was raised to the right hand of God. Rachel's "soul" departed; her body remained and was buried (see I Sam. x, 2).

Verses 21-26. Reuben's birthright was cut off for this act, and that of Simeon and Levi for what they did in xxxiv, 25, so that it came down to Joseph (see I Chron. v, 1, 2). Israel stored up in his mind what had happened (xlix, 4). Compare Moses' blessing—Let Reuben live, and not die (as he deserved) Deut. xxxiii, 6.

Verses 27-29. Though recorded here, Isaac's death evidently occurred later on in the chronological sequence of the story. Esau and Jacob meet again. In xxvii, 41. Esau had made a vow to slay his brother when their father died. Now Isaac is dead, but God restrains Esau from his purpose of years before.

Chapter xxxvi, 1-43. The maturing of government (kings and dukes). They appear much sooner in the earthly line than in the spiritual, though promised to Jacob's line. Exodus xv, 15 mentions dukes of Edom, but Israel had no king until Saul.

The natural is disposed of before the spiritual, as in iv, Cain and Seth; x, Japhet and Ham before Shem; xxv, Ishmael before Isaac. Edom is only traced to four generations, but the line of promise is never let go. The men of renown (Psalm lxxxvii) are Zion's children.

Some were dukes of the Horites (v. 29), who were the aboriginal inhabitants; there was hideous amalgamation with the people of the land. Here, perhaps, is the reason for the inveterate hatred in Esau's descendants, although not displayed by Edom himself.

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