



# Assembly Testimony



## *Contents*

### **MEDITATIONS ON THE OFFERINGS**

by John M. Cowan

### **THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

by R. W. Beales

### **HOW I WAS CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD IN ALASKA**

by T. J. Thompson

### **THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING**

by John Rae

### **JOHN MARK—HIS FAILURE AND RECOVERY**

by W. J. McClure

### **THE LAST DAYS**

by A. M. S. Gooding

### **CHRIST AND THE MASS MOVEMENTS OF HIS DAY**

by H. Winfield Graham

## *My Bible*

Blessed production, endless instruction,  
Heaven's sweet message, latent in thee.  
Character forming, whole life adorning,  
Constant companion, I've proved thee to be.

Darkness dispelling, future foretelling,  
God's inner thoughts now shining serene.  
Profound simplicity, clear authenticity,  
Constant assurance I from thee glean.

Critics' contesting, intellects' jesting,  
But deepens my confidence, firmly and sure.  
Grasping eternity, loosing mortality,  
More like my Saviour, holy and pure.

Heaven-commended, perfectly blended,  
Grace twined with truth, in teaching true.  
Blessed conviction, no contradiction,  
Entire inspiration, in Old and New.

Enfolding treasure in ocean's measure,  
Stored up for seekers on bended knee.  
Spirit dependant, riches resplendent,  
Thanks for my Bible, Lord, I give to Thee.

J. Cadzow

## BRIEF MEDITATIONS ON THE OFFERINGS

by JOHN M. COWAN, Motherwell.

### THE PEACE OFFERING—Leviticus 3 (continued)

*We regret that the second part of our brother Cowan's article on The Peace Offering was unfortunately omitted from the last issue of the magazine. We return to it this month and trust that both writer and readers will forgive this mistake.*

HAVING considered briefly something of the "What" of the offering, we turn ourselves now to the "How" of the offering. Lev. 7. 11-21; 28-34. "This is the Law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which he shall offer unto the Lord" (Lev. 7. 11). It is very noticeable that, in the "What" of the offering, the peace offering follows the burnt offering and the meal offering, while in the "How" of the offering, it follows the trespass offering. It is felt that the reason for this is because of our frailty and our failing character God has made provision for us, so that in the first case the sin and trespass offerings follow. The intention of God, however, was that there should have been no need for the Sin and Trespass Offerings and Peace Offering character would have been our continual state. Is not this what John is teaching in his first Epistle (chapter 2, verse 1): "My dear children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not, but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one."

Such is the tender compassion of our God: "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not". Notice, in the Burnt Offering, it is of the cattle, of the herd and of the flock, but His compassions add the fowls. Again, in the Trespass Offerings, if he be not able to bring a pigeon or a dove, the compassions of God allow "the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour" (Lev. 5. 11). God is not tolerant with sin, but is compassionate with the sinner. Is not this the concept of the Psalmist in Psalm 130. 3: "If Thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" As we consider our own unworthiness and the constant kindness and care which our God is continually lavishing upon us, surely this should provoke us to greater determinations, that we may require less of His provision for sin, and enter more into the joy and blessedness of that which he has provided for us in Peace Offering character.

In the "How" of the offering, there are a variety of motives which might prompt our exercise. It could be the outcome of thanksgiving (Lev. 7. 12), or a Vow or a voluntary offering (Lev. 7. 16), out of a deep sense of

gratitude. There are so many avenues provided for the outlet of the upsurge of our affections. God delights in promoting these and prolonging them. There is so much we need to thank Him for, that this exercise should keep us occupied for the greater part of our lives; all that is within us should be constantly stirred up to bless His Holy Name. In the offering of thanksgiving, "then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour saturated; beside the cakes he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his Peace Offerings, and of it he shall offer one out of the whole oblation an heave offering unto the Lord, it shall be the Priests that sprinkle the blood of the Peace Offerings, and the flesh of the sacrifice of his Peace Offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning" (Lev. 7. 12-15).

The Law of the Peace Offering: A law is that which operates with unfailling regularity and which provides guidance and instruction in all to which it directs. A very full and comprehensive impression of the Lord Jesus in life and death is thus given to us in this detailed expression of the Peace Offering for thanksgiving and provides the constant course which this exercise should take. There were also statutory provisions concerning the Heave shoulder and the Wave breast which were laid down as perpetual obligations, indelibly engraved, and to depart from any of these would have rendered the offering void and constituted the offerer an offender before God. "God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of all those that are about Him" (Psalm 89. 7). Consequently, the offerer, with all those who participated with him in the offering, had to have **Comprehension, Carefulness and Cleanliness.**

Let us now consider the character of the Peace Offering and the conditions which would provoke the offering to be made. Thanksgiving was its general character and was the expression of a consciousness of God in their lives, overcoming all their difficulties and constantly leading them in triumph on their homeward way. Every fresh experience would be productive of fresh outbursts of praise, thanksgiving, gladness and gratitude unto Him and, as the Psalmist has said, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise, be thankful unto Him, blessing His name, for the Lord is good, His lovingkindness is everlasting and His truth endureth for ever" (Psalm 100. 4-5). **His Essential Goodness, His Everlasting Lovingkindness and His Enduring Truth.** Each

fresh occasion, as it was freshly celebrated, would lead to recollections in a retrospective way of their own unworthiness and of the multi-coloured grace of God.

As we consider the variegated character of the Peace Offering and all that it typically expressed concerning our Blessed Lord Jesus in life and death, surely our hearts are gladdened and our praises and thanksgivings will be rising up as we consider Him. These moments of festal fellowship with Him and with one another, in the consciousness of nearness, and in the retrospective recollections of His work and worth, and not only to be sharers with Him in time but anticipatively looking forward to the grandeur and glories which He has won for us, which we will share with Him throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Behold Israel after the flesh: Are not they which eat the sacrifices partakers of the altar (in fellowship with the altar). **A Satisfied God, a Sustained Priesthood, with a Sharing People.** All the fat for God, the Wave Breast and the Heave Shoulder and the share of the cakes for His Priestly Ones, the rest of the offering and the cakes for the people of God, as in this happy togetherness they feast on Him. We have already briefly described the meaning of the fat. The cakes unleavened and leavened—His living worth and our unworthiness—those progressive expressions of the development of His humanity seen in these unleavened cakes, mingled, saturated or anointed with oil: His incarnation, "That Holy Thing"; His life, privately and officially "the Holy One of God"; the offering itself, that Precious Death, not the conception of His sufferings only but that precious outflow of all that His death has produced for us.

**The Wave Breast: The devoted affections** of the Lord Jesus, the food of the priestly ones and productive of energetic affections in them: the mighty mainspring of priestly activity, as nourished and sustained by this participation in Him; the development of those sympathetic sensibilities, which could be touched with the feelings of the infirmities of others, so as to engage themselves actively in a ministry of sympathy and succour.

**The Right Shoulder: The dedicated strength** of the Lord Jesus in absolute consecration to the Will of God, "doing always those things that please Him". "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God". Into a world which teemed with responsibilities, He came, not to shirk them but to shoulder them, until every iota and tittle was fulfilled. This is the feeding which will be conducive to the production of divine determination "to do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us". Priestly exercises in attendance

at the altar can only thus be sustained. It will be observed that all that touched the altar was for God. He claimed all the fat, all the frankincense, and all the blood and, while this is rightly so, the offerer and the sons of Aaron shared the joy of ministering to Him. The offerer with His own hands brought the offering, the fat with the breast that the breast might be waved, the blood sprinkled and the fat burned. Thus in these connected exercises, in this communal way, there was the joyous experience of God and His priestly ones, with the offerer and his friends, all entering into this festive fellowship of feasting on the preciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ in life and death. These exercises which were the occasion of thanksgiving had to be commenced and concluded the same day. They had not the morning in view, but belonged to the joys of the present, each day bringing its own fresh stirrings of our affections and producing that gladness of heart which enabled us to continue for Him down here, "the joy of the Lord being our strength".

"The flesh of the sacrifice of his Peace Offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until morning" (Lev. 7. 15); "but if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow or a volutary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice; and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten" (Lev. 7. 16).

In the offering for thanksgiving, present enjoyment seems to be the theme; it is the present joy of our communion in all the freshness of its experience and expression, feasting together in the blessed enjoyment of all that is ours, the precious outflow of the triumphs of the cross.

In the offering for a vow, while it touches the present, it seems to have a more prospective thought and constantly has "the morrow" in view. In all of the occasions when the vow was made, it had a future fulfilment, as the expectation and language of the offerer was, "if Thou wilt, then I will". Consequently, while it touched the present, the fulness of its consummation was in the future. Is there not a combination of both thoughts in our experience when we come together in this festal way? When the feast was instituted, the injunction was, "This do for a remembrance of Me", thus showing forth or proclaiming the Lord's death till He come. "Remembering Him", our Present Joy: "When He comes", the Fulness of joy: "In Thy presence is fulness of joys" (Psalm 16. 11). In the Nazarene vow, at its consummation all the aspects of the Lord's death and life are brought to remembrance, the Peace Offering coming into particular prominence: "and after



that", the Nazarite may drink wine (Num. 6. 20). Could we relate this to the words of the Lord Jesus as He instituted the feast, Matt. 26. 29: "Drink ye all of it", **our Present Joy**: "but I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it fresh with you in My Father's Kingdom": **our Prospective Joy**.

These precious experiences, as portrayed in the Peace Offering, have had their commencement, and will continue until their consummation on that day; "but let a man examine himself and so let him eat" (1 Cor. 11. 28), **this** is the portion of all that are clean.

## **NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

### **(Chapter 8)**

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES, Ipswich.

#### **THE NEW COVENANT**

**T**HE next few verses (9. 16-18) have been taken in two different ways, on the one hand the making of a will, on the other the covenant. It is somewhat questionable as to whether Israelites of old made wills in the way we do to-day. Inheritances passed on usually from father to son without question (exceptions being allowed for under the law). If therefore we take the latter view it fits in better with the whole argument of the epistle and we should have to read, "where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the covenant victim, for a covenant is of force over death, otherwise it is of no strength at all while the covenant victim liveth". Perhaps as there is a division of opinion among teachers we may be allowed to do the safest thing, and that is, to have BOTH!

Verses 19-21 have in view, not the passover in Egypt, but the inauguration of the first covenant in Exodus 24. 6-8, but verses 21-22 show that this initial act was followed up by sprinkling with blood on the later erected tabernacle and all its vessels, though we shall look in vain for a reference to this in Exodus. This is added information and shows the necessity for constant sacrifice and blood sprinkling throughout Israel's history, again in contrast with Christ's one sacrifice, once offered, which completely sanctifies, purges and brings once-for-all forgiveness (v. 22). It will be noted it is what Moses did, not Aaron.

"The heavenly things themselves" purified. Surely it was in heaven where sin first reared its ugly head, and one of old said, "even the heavens are not clean in His sight"; though some of the speaker's words were not all reliable, yet these may well have been.

Verses 24-28 emphasise this once-for-all character, and moreover give us the three "appearings" of Christ, these words "appearing" are not the same in the Greek but give us three different thoughts. Once in the end of the ages (i.e. the past O.T. ages) He appeared to put away sin (i.e. from the sight of God) by His sacrifice. This appearance means His "visible appearance" among men (v. 26). Now He appears in the presence of God for us, means an official, glorious display (v. 24). And finally to them that look for Him, He shall appear, which means "face to face" (v. 28). This will be apart from the question of sin altogether. He dealt with that fully and finally at His first appearing. Salvation here being the full and final salvation, spirit, soul and body, a body like His. We "look for Him" to come a second time. Israel awaited with apprehension the appearance of their High Priest from the Holy Place, we wait with joyful anticipation.

### WE MAY ENTER

In chapter 10 we come to the fact of the impermanent results of the sacrifices of old. They could not make the comers perfect, the worshippers were not once for all purged. They could not take away sins (vv. 4, 11). In between these verses we have the quotations repeated from Psalm 40. These do not mean that then in O.T. times God had not ordained sacrifices as is taught by some from this passage, but that God could not take full satisfaction in them because of their ineffectiveness and repetition, these had to be "taken away", but only by another and more perfect and complete sacrifice, for which a body was prepared for Him so to do. "Lo I come" means, "I am come and am here" and "I spring eagerly". It was not a reluctant coming. Also it was effective in sanctifying once and for all time. And so, He "sits down in perpetuity" in contrast to the fact that the priests when ministering in the holy places never did. The only seat there was the mercy seat. The word "perfect" in v. 1 and again in v. 14 gives us the great contradiction. Not sinlessly perfect but as regards the otherwise accusing conscience. And sit there He does until His enemies be made His footstool, until His reigning time on earth.

The reader is asked to examine the words "once" and "once for all" in this Epistle in 9. 7, 26, 28; 10. 2; 12. 26, 27, and the latter in 7. 27; 9. 12; 10. 10. Also the Holy Spirit is a witness to us. He has witnessed throughout to the all sufficiency of the sacrifice, which was made and offered up to God in His power (9. 14), but how could we know assuredly that that sacrifice had been accepted of God?



There was always a danger to Aaron that unless all had been done according to the divine order he would not come out again alive. "That he die not" always resounded in his ears, for had not two of his sons died before the Lord?

We now arrive therefore at something of which there was no forshadowing and something which was not included in the opening summary of the epistle (1. 1-3). Up to this point the items of that summary have been unfolded, but now there is something new. The entrance of Christ into the Holy place was actual and bodily, in His new resurrected body. He entered alone it is true, but the Holy Spirit has come forth to be a witness to us as to the acceptance and value of that sacrifice, the enthronement and glorification of that High Priest, and moreover to conduct us in spirit thither also.

We too, are to enter, we are to draw nigh, this not in bodily presence as yet, but in spirit, and who does not know the peculiar joy and satisfaction of so doing, at all times, not once a year, but constantly and continually, individually and collectively. There is no more any offering for sin (v. 18, and see the warning in similar words in v. 26), for none is needed. Sins and iniquities will be remembered against us no more, and in due time, even for Israel, the time is coming when God's laws will be written on their hearts and in their minds, and their sins remembered no more.

We have boldness, or confidence, or freedom of speech, in entering the Holiest through the blood of Jesus, the same means by which He entered (through, by or in the value of His own blood. 9. 12, 24). Let us here point out the utter fallacy of the teaching amongst some, that at a certain date (1844) Jesus entered the holiest of all for the first time, and is there "examining His peoples' sins". In Lev. 10 it is constantly reiterated that the high priest went into "the Holy Place" which there is synonymous with "the Holiest of all" and into that Holy Place which is the Holiest of all, Christ, on His ascension, entered. The scripture says so.

## **HOW I WAS CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD IN ALASKA**

by T. J. THOMPSON

I WAS born at Belfast, N.I., in 1925 of godly parents, who from my earliest recollections told me of my need of Christ. Blessed also with an assembly upbringing, my dear dedicated S.S. teachers and Gospel preachers watered the seed faithfully.

From early days I was convinced of my sin, which was manifest in spite of my privileged environment, often desiring to be saved. This came only after I was married and booked to sail to S. Africa in the year 1947! My wife having been saved 4 months before me and showing it, plus the prayers of my dear mother especially, brought me into great conviction and in mid-January I was saved to the glory of God. Baptised a few weeks after and gathered with saints 'in Jesus Name' at "the Vic" . . . "days of heaven filled our beings".

God, strangely enough, changed my ambitions for earthly things to the things of Jesus Christ on the ship to Africa. Seeing immorality and ungodly depravity of many, plus the indifference and sensuality of most "clergy", I commenced "Bible Readings"!!!! at nights and many attended. "A fool on fire" would aptly cover this venture which God sustained. No hymn-books, but I had made many hand copied pages which were used by all, except an assembly missionary lady who rebuffed me, "most unscriptural"! "There is a fountain filled with blood". ( I still love it and sing it joyfully after all these years).

Early days in a new country were full of character building and preparatory (unthought and unimaginable then) experiences, in which the Lord became more precious, daily. In spite of set-back no ardour for the assembly or the Gospel was lost. We cast our lot with a nucleus of a small group meeting in a scout hall at Rosebank and this was our school of spiritual learning. Gospel activity, in S.S. work, door to door tract work, open-air preaching, institutional gospel effort, personal witnessing, was my daily lot. All assembly meetings and functions were utmost in our hearts. Dear friends made us "at home" and their names are held in reverence to-day, words and ways so Christ-like had much to do with moulding us.

During Mr. G. Knowles (formerly of Palestine) visit to our assembly in the season of 1950/51 is the time I had a definite experience "of yielding my life" to the Lord. In my bedroom after a soul-searching meeting I said, "Lord, wherever Thou dost want, I'll go", thinking only of serving somewhere in line with my secular work. I was transferred to the Cape at the end of that year and arrived in the Cape assured "this is the place of God's choice". Entering into fuller ministry of gospel meetings, even at lunch-hour factory gatherings, opportunity in ministry amongst Cape assemblies, few were happier than me. God gave increase in souls saved, and saints who spoke of blessing.

Early in 1952 while reading a report in an assembly magazine my mind was arrested by an aged worker's plea for the land of Alaska. The impression remained with

me for days and clearly the Lord's will was that "there is where I want you to go, will you?" I spent much time in prayer and as I read God's Word affirmative answers came with much clarity. Disclosing this solemn turn of events to my wife she said, "When we are to go tell me and I will pack the cases". Next I sought out men of spiritual discernment such as H. Vine (brother of W. E. Vine), dear old Dave Morris, Alf. Cuff, J. Kerr and some others whose minds were trained in the things of God; these I asked to seek condemnation or confirmation from the Lord.

At the close of 1953 unity of mind prevailed with these men and in spite of obstacles for faith to overcome, at a combined meeting of brethren from several assemblies, six gatherings of the Lord's people joined in commending us to the Lord for the ministry He had called us to. Mr. A. Cuff (formerly of China) gave his personal commendation which greatly strengthened our hearts, quoting Nahum 1. 7 emphasising: "The Lord knows **them** that trust (not them that say they trust) in Him". "Tommy, the Lord always tries true faith but NEVER disappoints it", he wrote. How these words have comforted me often since.

Sailing shortly after for Alaska via Ireland where U.S.A. advised us to seek visa's which were more easily obtainable. Arriving there I had no desire to "publish our call", consequently we fellowshipped with another assembly during our stay there, requesting the letter of commendation to be read "omitting" details; we wished to prove the sustaining hand of the Lord without publicity. How graciously God supplied all our needs and when we were due to sail this assembly of Maranatha Gospel Hall, Belfast, joined in our commendation. Few can realise how much this meant to us at such a time.

Arriving in New York knowing no one was to meet us, and 6 dollars in my pocket, with near 6000 miles to go, surely we felt like Moses with his wife and two boys and an ass going to deliver Israel. "Ridiculous," says reason—"Incredible," says carnality—but unlike Moses I had no donkey but two cases! but the same Blessed Master. Amen. Mr. T. Ball had written ahead and we were met at the boat by a big hearty Dutchman and his dear wife who took us home.

Without a word to any as to needs the Lord supplied an old car through the help of Mr. W. Rea, and as one said, "An old car and lots of faith, did he ever make it?"

Fourteen years of happy service has been concluded, many saved and gathered to the Name, a fully autonomous assembly functioning to the Glory of God here in Anchorage, and some still living for the Lord while some are "at

home'. Now what?

Due to another exercise of heart we will go to another sphere of service, and as He led before so we know He will lead again.

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Jesus will last."

## **CHRIST AND THE MASS MOVEMENTS OF HIS DAY**

by H. WINFIELD GRAHAM

**M**ASS professions of faith in Christ with a minimum of depth and reality are common in our days, but such movements existed when Christ was on earth and it would be to our profit to observe His attitude to such, and to learn therefrom. We purpose, therefore, to glance briefly at four examples, taking them in their chronological order.

During the first passover of our Lord's public ministry we read: "Many believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did" (John 2. 23—3. 3). One of their number, Nicodemus, expressed their way of reasoning: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these things that thou doest, except God be with him". But Jesus did not commit himself (same verb as believe) to them, He did not own them as disciples, nor recognise their faith as of divine origin. He knew man, that his condition is such that only the divine work of the new birth can give him any insight into spiritual things, the things of the kingdom of God. A faith based on human reasoning is worthless.

We live in days when every resource of human wisdom, science and persuasion is employed to lead men to a confession of faith in Christ. A production line to manufacture conversions is set up, and often the confession is little more than that Jesus is a divine teacher. At the end of the line the converts appear, and they are of the same type as those to whom Jesus did not commit Himself. Nor should we, even though at times a Nicodemus does appear among them.

If some religious reporters had been covering the events recorded in the last half of Matthew 4, what headlines and stories they could have published. "Jesus began to preach . . . the gospel of the kingdom and healing . . . and His fame went throughout all Syria . . . and there followed Him great multitudes of people from . . . (vv. 17, 23-25). The revival has come, multitudes full of enthusiasm are hailing the King and are interested in the kingdom. And

what does Jesus think of it all? The sermon on the mount (ch. 5-7) is the answer: "Words without works, religious enthusiasm without repentance, the vast majority have entered the wide gate of empty profession and walk in the broad way that leads to destruction, and only a minority enter by the strait gate and tread the narrow path that leads to life". (After preaching the gospel of the kingdom, John the Baptist greeted similar crowds: "O generation of vipers"—Luke 3. 7). Certainly a study of the famous sermon in its context should open the eyes of many to see that the Lord, in contrast with many modern so-called evangelists, had no interest in promoting such movements but used every means to discourage them. He uncovered the sham work and warned the "converts" of their danger.

As a result of the feeding of the five thousand there was a movement to make Him king and men were talking about Him as the prophet (John 6. 14, 15). But He constrained the disciples to depart (Mark 6. 45), doubtless to remove them from the danger of being carried away by the popularity. He himself went up to the mountain to pray. Then when the people finally overtook Him He gave a message that was described as a hard saying, and many of His disciples walked no more with Him (John 6. 25-66). They had come for carnal material gain although he had not promised such. Much modern preaching offers to men healing, happiness, help in their examinations, in their business, even in their sports, a solution of all their problems. Many are willing to have the company of such a super-friend, and lightly "decide for Christ". But Christ was interested in the spiritual needs of men, and He came as the true bread from heaven, and not all have an appetite for this bread. Those who are given to Him by the Father, those who are brought by the Father, those who are taught of God will come, and those who come are not cast out (vv. 37, 44, 45). Sinners are not brought to saving faith in Christ by false promises; they are brought by the power of the Spirit to a divine person to enjoy spiritual blessings. Such vain promises were never used by Christ to attract followers as we shall notice in our next case.

"And there went great multitudes with Him" (Luke 14. 25). Some may have a very shallow experience, and little knowledge of what is involved, but better to encourage them in the hope that they may improve later. Not so thought Christ. He would make them see at once the cost of discipleship. No path of roses, no popularity, no applause from a Christ-hating world. A cross of shame to bear, self to be dethroned and denied, material things to be held as only entrusted to us as stewards, family ties to take

second place and Christ to be supreme in the life. That was His way of dealing with the multitudes of would-be followers. No path of ease and heavenly sunshine was that which our blessed Lord set before men. He stressed the reality of things, for He knew that the disciples of a crucified man could not evade the reproach and scandal of the cross. Let us see to it that in our preaching we tell men the truth that they may not be deluded by false hopes. Those who receive the word with joy are stumbled by the persecution which the word arouses and turn aside. (Matthew 13. 20, 21).

The parables of Matthew 13 were spoken to the great multitudes who thronged around Him, and the Lord in His teaching follows the lines we have been touching upon. A study of them throws great light on the mass movements of our day. Let us seek to have the mind of Christ in our attitude to the evangelism that surrounds us.

## THE LAST DAYS

MORE EVILS

by A. M. S. GOODING.

**Fierce, Despisers of that which is good, Traitors, Heady, Highminded!** So does the Spirit of God bring to an end this awful list of the characteristic features of the last days. As we look at these we do not need to ask ourselves whether the last days are upon us. Surely "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh".

Everywhere there is an increase in violence, old women are assaulted and murdered by irresponsible youths. Old age pensioners are no longer safe in their own homes. Violence with robbery increases so rapidly that a Glasgow Member of Parliament makes an urgent plea for greater powers for the police, and greater penalties, even the return of the death sentence in some cases, only to be told that the authorities will not be driven into any hasty action through a wave of hysteria. Violence increasing and authority unable or unwilling to take decisive action against it!

Coupled with this all too apparent fierceness is the "despising of that which is good"—Not lovers of good! There is an ever increasing love of that which is evil, immoral, depraved and ungodly. Truly the words of Enoch are becoming more and more applicable as days like unto the days of Noah draw near. "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds that they have ungodly committed, and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him". The very features that believers are told to cultivate, which the Holy Spirit delights to

produce as abundant fruit for God in the lives of His people are those which are despised in this modern world. To display them is to be considered a weakling. Practice evil and men will follow your movements with keen interest. Practice godliness and men will pass you by.

**Traitors**, a most unsavoury word. Judas stands out as the Biblical forerunner of many who have followed, even to modern times. Fifth-columnists! Quislings! Traitors! We have had them all. But that same spirit which allows men to sell their closest friends and betray their own countries and sear their own consciences is all around us. It is no longer principle but popularity. Herein lies a danger for the people of God. How often to-day fellow believers and divine principles are betrayed for personal advancement. There will doubtless be a manifestation of much that falls into this mold when the hidden things of darkness are revealed at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**Heady, Highminded**—Yes! with all that sad list of unworthy features, where that which is of God is despised, and that which is of the devil is exhibited and applauded, man lifts his head in pride and arrogance, failing to see the awful mess that he has made. Headstrong and determined he pursues his Godless course which will inevitably end in destruction.

**Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God.** More amazing still is the fact that men love pleasure—no disturbing of the conscience, no remorse at the conditions, not even the slightest tinge of a blush on the cheek. Man shuts his eyes to the vileness of his day and rushes into pleasures—and often pleasures of the most questionable kind. It is not as the A.V. says, “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” as though pleasures were loved a lot and God was loved a little. This is not a question of relative values, of comparison, but of contrast—viz., “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”. Man drunken with pleasure has to-day no place for the God of the Bible though he may fondly worship a god of his own imagining. Man according to his own estimation has risen to unprecedented heights while actually he has degenerated and is far from what God intended him to be. He has failed miserably relative to the first and great commandment and the second that is like unto it.

**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**

Matthew 22. 37-40.



## THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

by JOHN RAE, Prestwick.

THE greatest honour God ever conferred on a man was to give Him the cross. God didn't die on the cross. Deity could not die; but the man who died was God. He was on equality with God. Jesus was identical in essence, equal to God in nature (Phil. 2. 6). He emptied Himself becoming man and His obedience reached unto death. Wherefore, God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name above every other name. When He was born, they named Him Jesus (Saviour), the shadow of Calvary was over that name. The wise men brought Him myrrh, the emblem of death. Herod's sword was after Him, as man they sought to stone Him, they crucified Him and buried Him. This was the world's 'No' to Him. Yet, His death solved every problem in the universe for God. God's way is the way down and it is also the way up.

God uses a divine technique in the path of suffering and suffering is a divine gift. David said, "In pressure Thou hast enlarged me" (Psalm 4. 1, J.N.D.). "It is good for me," said David, "that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psalm 119. 71), and he could add that it was in faithfulness he had been afflicted. (Psalm 119. 75). See the lovely Psalms he wrote as the fruit of his affliction.

Notice also, the three classes of infirmities which Job endured—health, wealth and family—and his three friends practically telling him that he was only reaping what he had sown. But Job could say that he knew his "Vindicator liveth" (Job 19. 25, R.S.V.). Job had a wonderful harvest when he prayed for his friends. God did not save the three Hebrew youths **from** the fire; He was **with them** in it. God may not keep us from trial, but He can be with us in the trial.

Disciples are learners, Jesus the teacher and the lesson. We are supposed to be 'to-day's men', as it is written, "let the day's own troubles be sufficient for the day". In Luke 8. 22 He said, "Let us go to the other side". He always moved under the direction of His Father, so in confidence He fell asleep. A storm arose, they awoke Him saying, "Lord, we are perishing". As moving under the directions of His Father, He hadn't a care. He arose and rebuked the wave and wind, and they all knew their Lord and Master. They said, "What manner of man is this?" (Matthew 8. 27).

Again in Matthew 14 they had to learn that Jesus did not require a boat; He came to them walking on the water. The elements that could have destroyed them were under

His feet, not a ripple could move without Him. Impetuous Peter said, "If it be Thou command me to come to Thee". Peter stepped out to walk to his Lord, but he took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. When in trouble keep your eyes on Jesus! Stephen kept his eye on Jesus in all his trouble, he was the first man to see the blessed Man in glory. The disciples that day said, "Truly, thou art God's Son". They were advanced in their knowledge of their Saviour through their trials.

In Hebrews 12 discipline is a proof of our sonship, "because ye are sons". What a thought to thrill our beings as we have the care of our Great High Priest. Here we have another great thought, that "such a High Priest became us"; we are a wonderful company in His eyes. Seven times in John 17 He speaks of our being the Father's gift to Him, and how He values the Father's gift to Himself.

### JOHN MARK—HIS FAILURE AND RECOVERY

by the late W. J. McCLURE.

IN recording brief notices of the lives of His servants in His Word, God had our good in view. Each life has its lessons for us, of profit and blessing. The first time we meet the name of John Mark in the Word, is in Acts 12, 12, where we find his mother's house as the place "where many were gathered together praying". The mention of his mother's house in this connection, is suggestive. We are not surprised at God honouring her by calling her son into His blessed service. Would to God that there were many mothers who were so distinguished in these days! We might first glance at his name. Scripture names have their own significance. John means, "The gift, or grace of God". It may remind us how all was of grace. Grace reached him as a lost sinner, and saved him, and it was grace that gave him the honour of serving the Lord Jesus. Mark means "polite". "Be courteous," (1 Peter 3. 8), is an injunction which applies to every child of God. How important that it should be heeded by all who would serve the Lord, either in His Gospel or among His people. Such should ever be faithful, but never rude. In 2 Tim. 2. 24-25 we read, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves". In the words "gentle, patient, meek", we are reminded of the graces seen in God's perfect Servant, our Lord Jesus. There is a true heavenly polish, found in many who never moved in polite society, and which could never be acquired there. It can only be acquired by walking with God. In Acts 12. 25 we see John Mark starting out, as it were, on his trial trip. Barnabas and Saul take him with them. What a mercy it

would be for many a young man who goes forth in the Lord's work, if he had the fellowship and counsel of experienced and godly men for a time, instead of being alone, or, what is worse, with one who lacks the true evangelist's spirit, has no ambition to break up new ground, and is without confidence in God, for the supply of his temporal need in places where there is no assembly of believers.

The second notice we get of John Mark is in chapter 13. 5, where Barnabas and Saul "had also John to their minister". The word "minister" here means "an under-rower", one who assists, and indicates a position like that of Elisha in 2 Kings 3. 11, who "poured water on the hands of Elijah". Thus John Mark had a lowly service, not calculated to puff him up. It is good to have grace to fill such a sphere. Chapter 13. 13 gives us his breakdown, which was the cause of a very sorrowful happening. "John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem". One can easily conjecture what was the matter. The halo that in his view surrounded the path of the servant of God may have gone. He has now had some experience of the "afflictions of the Gospel," as he moved about with those who had "no certain dwelling place", often doubtless wearied, hungry, homeless. It is little wonder that he yielded to the temptation to return to a comfortable home. He may have felt a measure of disappointment in not having had a more prominent place in the work of the Lord. But whatever the cause, the "root" of the matter was evidently in John Mark himself, as we shortly learn, when Paul and Barnabas are about to start out on another trip.

In chapter 15. 37-39 we read: "Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder from one another". No doubt they both regretted such an issue in after days. It was the failure of good men in the matter of personal judgment. The word "determined" is too severe, and puts Barnabas, we think, in an unfair light. It is rendered "proposed", and Dr. Young gives the meaning of it as "to take counsel". But Paul, who was so real and whole-hearted himself, thought that one who appeared to shirk the work, would only be a hindrance to them, and was as strong in opposing John Mark's going with them again, as Barnabas was to have him. Possibly Barnabas, because of his relationship to John Mark, may have wanted to give him another chance, or had he seen some exercise of heart on his part, that Paul had not known, and so was more ready to help

him back into the path of service? In any case, Paul, and Silas his new co-worker, are recommended by the brethren to the grace of God, while Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus. What an amount of sorrow God's people might have been spared, had they always acted as the Christians and assemblies did in the days of Acts 15. Sides were not taken. It was not considered necessary to decide which of the two they were to have fellowship with, and refuse the other. It was not a matter in which they were called to act at all. If they had, it would probably have made a permanent breach. As it was, the trouble was soon healed. We gather from 1 Cor. 9. 6, which was written some seven years later, that these two dear servants of Christ are once more working together as yoke-fellows.

What about the one who was the cause of the temporary break in their fellowship? Paul, in writing to the Colossians (4. 10), says, "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom ye received commandments, if he come unto you, receive him". Some twelve years had passed since the trouble between Paul and Barnabas, his uncle, over him. He has in the meantime commended himself. When Paul wrote to Philemon from Rome, one of those who join in the salutation is Marcus (v. 24). Surely this speaks volumes. The man who ran away is now in the thick of the fight. Who would have thought it, Of him it is surely true, "Out of weakness made strong". When we come to Paul's last epistle (2 Tim. 4. 11) we read: "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable unto me for the ministry". Mark has made real progress. He has rolled away his reproach. Paul has learned his worth, and now the aged writer misses him, while he has been away from Rome. It is beautiful to mark the grace of God as here manifested in Paul. Although he had formed a decided judgment about John Mark, he will not always stick to it, regardless of what changes might take place in him and his ways. Yet often this has been the case among those who seek to serve a common Master! Paul's sympathetic references to both Barnabas and John Mark tell how thoroughly the past had been forgotten.

One thing more about John Mark. When God is giving us, as one of His Four Gospels, one whose special subject is to present the Perfect Servant, the only One who never failed, to whom does He give this great honour? Of all those whom He might use, He chooses John Mark. Beautiful grace! The servant who had failed but was restored, is used by the Father to write the wonderful record of the Servant who never turned back, but who always did those things which were pleasing in His sight.

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