



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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" There Shall Be "

Luke 1:45

*" There shall be," oh! sweet assurance
Of an all-sufficient Lord ;
There shall be a sure performance
Of each promise in His word :
For it is the Lord that worketh,
Mighty is His outstretched hand,
His Omnipotence will surely
Perfect all that He hath planned.*

*" There shall be," oh! soul believe it,
God will undertake for thee ;
Stay thine heart upon Jehovah,
His salvation thou shalt see ;
Stormy winds fulfil His purpose,
Mighty waves His word obey ;
Heed not then opposing forces,
Over all the Lord holds sway.*

*" There shall be," for He is faithful,
Changeless is His word and true ;
None can hinder His sure working,
He hath said and He will do :
Not a thought can be frustrated,
Not a promise be repealed ;
Every word that God hath spoken
By His faithfulness is sealed.*

RUTH THOMAS.

THE THINGS WHICH ARE

by Dr. JOHN BOYD

(Rev. 1 : 19)

Introduction

THESSE words, the second of the three-fold division of The Revelation (1 : 19) are an apt title for the letters to the seven churches in Asia, as set forth in ch. 2 and 3. The understanding of these letters is enhanced by considering some of the lessons of ch. 1.

Let us look first at the title of the Book itself, lit., **A Revelation**. This revelation is not concerning the person of Jesus Christ, as v. 1 seems to suggest. The preposition 'of' refers to the fact that Jesus is the author of the Book, as the rest of the verse indicates. God gave A Revelation to Jesus to show unto His servants ; it consisted of things which must shortly occur—mainly judgments, first of the churches (ch. 2 and 3), and then of man generally (ch. 4-22) ; it was sent by an angel to John, whose role seems to have been that of an editor. John's qualifications for the office are given in v. 2—the writer of the fourth gospel. A blessing is promised to those who read, who hear and who pay attention to its message (v. 3). Then follows (vv. 4-7) the editor's preface—his salutation from the triune God, finishing with a doxology. Verse 8 is the Author's preface—the Lord presenting Himself to us in all His divine, eternal omnipotence.

Thus far the introduction to the Book. At v. 9 John begins the recital. He tells of his experience on Patmos, when he heard behind him a trumpet-like voice telling him to write what he saw in a book, and send it to seven specially selected churches in the Roman province of Asia. Why these seven churches were chosen is at first not clear, for other better known churches also existed in that locality, e.g., Colosse and Hierapolis (Colossians 4 : 13). But Revelations 2 and 3 teach that they represented seven different types of church to which the Lord would make known His distinctive judgments.

John's writing of The Revelation would consist of three distinct sections (1 : 19), (A) 'The things which thou hast seen'—the vision John beheld when he turned toward the voice he had heard. This vision, described in ch. 1 : 12-16, portrayed many varied attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ, (B) 'The things which are'—the section of Revelation dealing with contemporary matters (ch. 2 and 3), (C) 'The things

which shall come to pass hereafter.' The word 'hereafter,' lit., after these things, points to occurrences after the things of ch. 2 and 3. Note 4 : 1, where the same expression is twice used in the verse. Thus this reference is to the matters dealt with in chs. 4-22, and refers to events after the Rapture of the Church.

But our main concern in these papers lies with the seven churches mentioned in v. 11. John turned toward the voice he heard, and got a vision of the glorious splendour and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ as He walked amidst the churches. John was so awe-stricken by the sight that he fell in a swoon at the Lord's feet. This vision is of particular interest in the consideration of the letters to the churches, for each letter is prefaced by a different facet of the Lord's glory, and has a direct bearing on the message.

These seven churches are metaphorically set forth as 'golden candlesticks,' or more exactly 'golden lightbearers,' 'lampstands.' This indicates that the prime function of the church is lightbearing. 'Lampstand' is to be preferred to 'candlestick.' A candle suggests something that is consumed in giving its light, whilst a lamp is constantly being replenished with oil, a fitting emblem of the Holy Spirit, as One who maintains the Church in its illumination of the world. The lampstands are of gold, a precious metal, indicating how very dear the Church is to God. Gold is also the emblem of deity, reminding us that the believer has been made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1 : 4).

The Lord walks in the midst of the lampstands (2 : 1). They are all separate from one another, unlike the seven-branched lampstand of the Tabernacle. Each church is independent of the others, and responsible only to the Head.

The figure 'seven,' the symbol of completeness, and often found in The Revelation, has here a great variety of lessons to teach us. Primarily it sets before us the complete picture of **the nature of the churches that existed in John's day**, 'the things which are.' These seven were representative of the testimony borne by other churches, all having a different degree of resemblance to the seven.

Secondly, seven points to **the prophetic presentation of the successive stages in the history of the Church** from Pentecost to the Rapture, each church in the order of mention showing the main characteristics of the Church generally in the succeeding periods of its history. But there are many difficulties

which make this line of interpretation unacceptable to some expositors. It needs for its explanation information outside of Scripture. We are not told anywhere else in the New Testament of seven such church periods ; it lends itself to an imaginative reading of things into the Scripture in view of the warning of Revelations 22 : 18 ; it lays too much emphasis on times, leads to date-fixing, and cannot accord with ch. 22 : 20-21 ; it wastes time on questions of little profit (2 Timothy 2 : 14), causing us to miss the practical lessons for to-day ; it delegates the truth of the other six epistles to times other than the one under consideration ; it panders to human vanity.

Thirdly, the number seven would indicate that we have a **complete picture of the church at any given time** since Pentecost, some churches having departed from God more than others, but in the midst of them all the Lord still walks (2 : 1). It includes our own time. It is the responsibility of every church to-day to examine itself to see into which of the seven church descriptions it more closely fits, to accept the Lord's judgment that applies to it, and to seek in repentance to follow His exhortations. Thus 'The things which are' have a practical application for us to-day. Their lesson is for those who read or hear them, whether in the first or twentieth century.

Fourthly, these letters may present to us **Seven different stages in the history of any given church to-day**, its experiences changing as the relationships to the Lord vary in these seven churches.

Of all these different interpretations of the letters those which have a direct application to the Church to-day are more profitable for our consideration in view of the blessing pronounced. We should be more concerned with what the Lord described as 'The things which are,' rather than with what is past, or even with what will yet be in the future.

Another point of interest in ch. I relative to the seven letters is the mention of seven stars in the Lord's right hand (v. 16). These seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches (v. 20). The identity of these angels is variously interpreted by different expositors. Some see the angel as a celestial being, with a special care for each church ; some the minister of the church ; some the body of overseers in the church ; some a delegate first sent to John from each church. Concerning this last suggestion there is no mention anywhere

in these chapters of delegates having been sent first to John from the churches.

'Angelos,' the Greek word translated 'angel' is lit., a messenger, and is used both of celestial (Matthew 1:20), and human (Matthew 11:10) messengers. It would seem from Revelation 2:1 that the angel there is not a celestial being, as it would not be possible for John to deliver a letter to such a messenger. Nor is it likely that the Lord would give by a heavenly angel (1:1) a message to John for him to transmit to another celestial being (2:1). Besides, the angels of the churches seem to have been men, themselves members of the churches, as they are praised and blamed equally with the churches. The angel is in some way associated with, and responsible for the activities of the churches. He is one with the church.

Other than in Revelations 1, 2 and 3, the word 'angelos' is used six times in the New Testament of man. In these places it is uniformly translated 'messenger.' He is a man sent with a message (Luke 7:24), with a task to perform (Luke 9:52), with an enquiry to make (James 2:25, Josh. 2:1). These three functions are all characteristic of the work of overseers in a church. It is their duty to pass on to the assembly messages from God (Titus 1:9); to take care of the flock of God (1 Timothy 3:5); to enquire into its welfare (Acts 20:28). The word 'star' in the New Testament is also used metaphorically of teachers (Jude 13), and of guides (Matthew 2:9), both essential functions of overseers—teachers (1 Timothy 3:2), rulers, or guides, lit., those who lead (Hebrews 13:7). Thus the overseers carry out the duties of the angel, the human messenger from the Lord to the church. That there are several overseers in a given church is no objection to their description by the singular noun angel, for they act as a body even as here the singular word 'lampstand,' described as representing the singular concept 'church,' is used of a company made up of many persons. Thus the star, explained as an angel, stands for the representative body of those who constitute God's messenger to the church. It is not necessary to insist that as the star and angel are singular nouns so must the human messenger to the church be a single person, that is, the minister of the church. The idea of one person to lead the church is foreign to the New Testament, where the work of overseeing any given local assembly is always in the hands of a plurality of persons.

In these seven letters to first century churches in Asia there is also a message for the churches of the twentieth century. These letters are still 'The things which are' in the churches to-day. Let us take them as such from Him who still walks in our midst observing, judging, commending, condemning, as He sees fit. Let us examine our church life in the light of these revelations, knowing that they 'were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come' (1 Corinthians 10 : 11). (To be continued)

RECOVERY AND ORDER

BRYAN SMITH, Edinburgh

A parallel drawn from the Book of Nehemiah and the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

AS we open the Book of Nehemiah we discover that Nehemiah is interested and concerned about those left of the captivity in Judaea and Jerusalem. Concerned about the people whom God had called (Nehemiah 1 : 10) and concerned about the one place, Divinely chosen, as the centre of worship for Israel. When he heard that the people were in great affliction and reproach and that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates consumed with fire, he "sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 1 : 4).

"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" (2 Corinthians 2 : 4). Thus we have an insight into the feelings of the apostle Paul as he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians. I wonder, brethren, what our reaction is to the sorrowful conditions amongst some of the churches of the saints today? Are we grieved and brought low before God because of it?

As a protest against the party spirit prevalent at Corinth, the apostle addresses them as "the church of God"—not of man. But how do we understand the rest of the verse? "Paul also sends the letter to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." "This links together all believers everywhere, and it shows the universal appeal of the epistle" (Heading). We cannot concur. The letter has a particular local application. They are saints in virtue of the Divine call and in fellowship with all who have similarly called upon the name of the Lord in every place. "The

apostle is reminding the Corinthians that they form only a part, and that but a small one, of the whole church of Christ, a consideration which their self satisfaction was leading them to forget" (Olshausen). No doubt the epistle is instructive for every church of God whenever and wherever they may be found. The apostle expresses his gratitude to God for work already accomplished, and the desires he cherishes for fresh progress to be made (v. 4-9). Both Nehemiah and Paul have before them the faithfulness of God (Nehemiah 1 : 9 : 1 Corinthians 1 : 9). "Yet will I gather them from thence and bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there." And when the apostle Paul appeals to the Corinthians to terminate the divisions among themselves he does so "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." There was to be agreement in the understanding of Divine truth, "of the same mind" and harmony in the resolving of particular questions, "of the same judgment." Alas, brethren, the present scene does not allow any to raise their head very high. The fact that we recognise Christ crucified for us and that we were baptised unto His name ought to unite believers not separate them (v. 13). But in this very section some see license to baptise infants "the household of Stephanas" (v. 16). They are to be baptised and brought up as disciples of the Kingdom although not of the church. "Baptism is into the Kingdom, not the Church" (Grant)—The Kingdom was proclaimed before the Church was formed and will be again after the translation of the Church to the Father's house, and is being proclaimed at present, for all who are in the Church are in the Kingdom of God. Besides, the household of Stephanas were old enough to serve the saints (ch. 16 : 15).

Nehemiah is able, according to the good hand of his God upon him, to come to Jerusalem with a view to helping the children of Israel. But "when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah his servant the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2 : 10). It was no different in Paul's time nor is it so in our day. He who seeks the welfare of the people of God will encounter those who will be grieved exceedingly at his aims and desires. Paul reminds the Corinthians that the gospel is not a presentation of human wisdom (ch. 1 : 18—2 : 5). God's wisdom, yes : but not man's ! Like them we are "in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom—an intelligent appreciation of the Divine plan of

salvation—"righteousness"—a positive standing before God (see Romans 1 : 5)—"Sanctification"—the practical outworking of this in the life of the believer (see Romans 6 : 8)—"redemption"—our complete and final deliverance (see Romans 8 : 18-30). Paul deliberately set aside depth of thought and charm of language, for the gospel is a power, not an intellectual exercise, a salvation not a philosophy. His "speech," the content of his message, and his "preaching," the form in which it was presented, was "in demonstration of the Spirit—the genitive of cause—and of power"—the mode of the Spirit's action assailing the mind and will of the individual. The result being a broken conscience and a believing heart. Thus the apostle sought to avoid 'false professions.' He sought their true welfare "that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2 : 5).

Nehemiah arrives at Jerusalem to view the ruin. For three days his spirit assimilated the scene of desolation and distress (Nehemiah 2 : 11). Again we read of the walls being broken down and the gates consumed with fire (Nehemiah 2 : 13). The holy city will yet be seen descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God and having a wall great and high—insurmountable of all that is contrary to God ; and having twelve gates—Divine administration in righteousness (Revelations 21 : 12). Nehemiah sees the ruin expressed in these two things, the wall and the gates.

Paul sees the same. If there is no true separation unto God there will be no true discernment of what is in keeping with the mind of God. The cross has separated us from the world—its wisdom, its ways, its religion. We are expected to exercise spiritual discernment in all things as having "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2 : 16). The apostle returns to the question of the party feeling at Corinth, the proof of their unspirituality. How was it that some were ranging themselves in their estimate of prominent servants when these same servants were united in service ? Besides they are servants not lords (1 Corinthians 3 : 1-9).

Nehemiah invites the people to come and build with him the wall of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2 : 17). They are scorned and despised by certain who heard of their preparation (v. 19). "Then answered I them and said unto them ; the God of heaven, He will prosper us ; therefore we His servants will arise and build ; but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memo-

rial, in Jerusalem ” (Nehemiah 2 : 20). Nehemiah is thus instrumental in arousing his brethren to arise and build with him the wall so as to secure Jerusalem, with its holy things, for God and so for the blessing of His people. There follows a detailed account of the differences of labour that went into the repairing of the gates and wall while all were working to the common end (Nehemiah 3, v. 1-32).

“ According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon ” (1 Corinthians 3 : 10). Do we build upon the foundation of local assemblies of God ? Surely we ought to have nothing to do with the systems of men, set contrary to the Word and settled in systematic resistance to the truth of God but we can as surely expend all our energy in building upon the foundation of local assemblies. But what does it mean to build “ gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble ? ” (v. 12). All are materials for building but all do not stand the fire. That which is costly, durable and beautiful is set against that which will be burnt up, “ and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is ” (v. 13). We submit that gold would suggest truth ministered in relation to the Divine glory of the Son of God. The Ark of the Covenant was overlaid with pure gold within and without. Silver would suggest truth in relation to the redemptive work of Christ. The ransom money was silver, although occasionally gold. The precious stones may speak of truth in relation to the moral perfections of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. All work will eventually be tested at the judgment seat of Christ. “ He shall receive the reward ” (v. 14). “ He shall suffer loss ” (of reward) (v. 15).

Nehemiah now discovers that opposition now becomes openly antagonistic. At first their work only excited anger and mockery but, as they pursued steadily in building, the result was a conspiracy to oppose and to terminate the work (Nehemiah 4 : 8). We now understand Nehemiah’s prayer as he anticipated the alliance and cries “ Let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee : for they have provoked Thee to anger before the builders ” (Nehemiah 4 : 5).

So, too, did the apostle Paul sense the provocation against the Lord of those who would seek to demolish God’s building. “ If any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you ” (1

Corinthians 3 : 17). The church of the dispensation is being built silently and surely (Ephesians 2 : 21, 22). The local church may not fare so well. The apostle concludes with more words bearing upon the prevalent party spirit. The men that you each say you belong to actually all belong to you. Paul, Apollos, Cephas, " And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's " (v. 23). To Christ only you belong, nor can His name be taken in a party way for He belongs to God. (To be continued)

FLESH AND BLOOD

ANDREW BORLAND

(John 6 : 53)

ONE of the strangest sayings recorded of our Lord is that in John 6 : 53, ' Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you ' and He added, ' He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ' (v. 54). To those who listened, it was a hard saying, and many were offended or stumbled (60-61). Their difficulty arose from the fact that they put a literal interpretation on the words, whereas our Lord intended them to be taken metaphorically, with a spiritual application. It should not be forgotten that the words were spoken at the time of the celebration of the feast of the Passover when sacrificial blood was shed and when the flesh of the paschal lamb was eaten.

The lengthy discourse arose out of the miracle of feeding the five thousand, and the rebuke which the Lord administered to the multitudes who followed Him because of what they expected. He corrected their materialistic attitude, advising them not to work for the food that perishes. They were primarily concerned about the physical comforts of life, a natural and legitimate desire, but one which they were pursuing to the detriment of higher aspects of life. Their concern should have been for the " food that endureth unto everlasting life." The Lord was re-asserting a fundamental principle of spiritual living that ' man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God.'

Further, the Lord disabused their minds of the misinterpretation of the manna, that miraculous supply of food in the wilderness. The Jews attributed the manna to Moses, but the Lord informed them that the true source was God, it came down from heaven ; and in its heavenly origin, it prefigured

‘ the true bread from heaven ’ (v. 32) whom the Father had sent. It was obvious that He was referring to Himself.

The discourse posed two problems for the Jews.

(a) How is it, then, that he saith, ‘ I came down from heaven ? ’ (42).

(b) ‘ How can this man give us his flesh to eat ? ’ (52).

It was the assertion of His claims which baffled and bewildered the Jews.

First, there was a general and undefined assertion in two parts.

(1) ‘ The bread of God is he who cometh down from heaven ’ (v. 33). That is the true bread, the ideal bread, spiritual bread, not a material substance like the manna. And yet it is a person whose identity so far has not been disclosed.

(2) That bread gives life to the world. Manna was limited in supply to a nation. The true bread was a supply capable of meeting a universal need. He could give life to the world ; he did not merely sustain physical life as the manna did ; he would give spiritual life and sustain it too. (To be continued)

Scriptural Principles which should characterise a Local Church

by **JAMES MOAR**

When God gave Moses instructions regarding His first dwelling place on earth—the Tabernacle—He said, “ See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the Mount ” (Heb. 8 : 5). In 1 Chron. 28 : 11, 12-19, we see Solomon receiving from David that which David had received from the Lord—a “ pattern ” of all things in relation to “ the house of God.” Now has God given His people no “ pattern ” of His spiritual “ house ” or “ habitation ” today ? Is His local habitation in this church age of less importance in His sight than His first dwelling place in the wilderness, or His house in Jerusalem ? Nay, verily ! In the building and ordering of His house today, He has not left us to our own discretion, nor to the methods of men to suit the times ; He has given us very definitely in His Word both the pattern and the specification of His local church. From verse 41 of Acts, chapter 2, we have the first local church brought before us, and surely it is of the greatest importance for us to get back to

the beginning of Church history. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, Peter was the first herald of the Cross, and 3,000 souls were saved through receiving the message which Peter proclaimed—"And they that gladly received his word were baptized." This was the first step in following the Lord after their conversion, and it should be the first step still. Then we see that these were added to the 120 who had been saved before them (Acts 1:15). And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. These first principles are clear and plain to every child of God who desires to do the will of God.

As the gospel spread, local churches were planted in many places. What were they called? Churches of God, churches of Christ, churches of the saints, or churches in any town or country where they were located, but no distinguishing names were adopted; they all met on the same principles, and they all preached the same doctrine. These were, and are still "the footsteps of the flock," "the old paths" (Jer. 6:16). Neither in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in the Epistles, do we find anything mentioned but scripturally gathered churches or assemblies, except of course synagogues, into which our Lord often entered as did His apostles when they were in localities where no church had been planted. (The last time we read of Paul being in a synagogue is in Acts 19 where he separated the disciples to the school of one Tyrannus (v. 9).)

Now we may ask, how is a true child of God received into a scripturally gathered church, or assembly of God? First, we believe there should be real exercise of soul on the part of those desiring church fellowship. When we were first of all brought to Christ it was through Spirit-created exercise of soul; and in these days when the church is so divided and when there are so many different schools of interpretation of the Scriptures, it surely behoves every sincere child of God to pray like the apostle Paul on the Damascus road—"Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"—or like the devoted seeking soul in Song of Solomon—"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" What was His answer to this earnest request?—"If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents." This was a very definite answer to her sincere inquiry. Do we not still have

“the footsteps of the flock” set before us in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles? “The old paths” are clear and plain to all who are prepared to “stand in the way” and “ask” for them (Jer. 6 : 16). Thus exercise of soul concerning church fellowship should lead us to the Word of God, our one and only guide book; simple obedience to the divine commandments will lead us into a scripturally gathered assembly of God.

Secondly, the seeking soul will make known his or her concern to some faithful brother in the assembly, who should inform the gathered company; reception into the assembly is a responsibility for the whole gathering (Acts 15 : 4) as is the putting away (1 Cor. 5 : 4, 5). The seeking soul will then be received into happy fellowship to share all the privileges and responsibilities of the assembly. This order may not always be adopted by assemblies professing to gather on scriptural lines. David no doubt thought it would not matter how the ark of God was brought back so long as it arrived safely, and he decided on a most convenient method, but it did not meet with divine approval—man’s ways are not God’s ways. Through the apostle, the Lord says, “Let everything be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14 : 40). Is it not better to seek to follow the Divine pattern and example in all we seek to do in His church today. Is it not departure from divine principles that has wrought such havoc in the church all down the church age?

Why do many assemblies of God insist on strangers bringing a letter of commendation from the assembly from which they have come? Simply because it is scriptural; we have an example in Romans 16 : 1-2; the commendation was not just to let the saints at Rome know that this sister Pheobe was a saved woman. There was far more to it than that—it was to let them know that she was in happy fellowship with the church at Cenchrea.

A letter of commendation should be carefully read in the presence and hearing of the assembly to which it is addressed; it should foster fellowship between the two assemblies as well as commend the person in question. It is a divine principle which should not be lightly esteemed.

Now what should be our attitude towards Christians who do not meet with us in assembly fellowship? We should ever remember that we are all one in Christ Jesus, and that “One is our Master even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” We

should therefore "love one another with a pure heart fervently," but because of unscriptural systems with which the great majority of our fellow christians are linked up, many of us cannot, in the light of what we have understood from scripture, feel free to have fellowship with them.

Christian unity and fellowship is one of the sweetest things on earth—it is what our Lord prayed for so fervently in John ch. 17—but this unity must be on scriptural ground. If certain truths of the Word of God concerning local assembly testimony have to be set aside for the sake of unity or toleration, then such compromise cannot be according to the mind of God. There is a universal cry all over Christendom today for church unity, but is this the unity for which Our Lord prayed in John 17? Nay, verily! This is a man-made unity, contrary to the Word of God, and similar to that attempted in the land of Shinar, on which the judgment of God came down—"therefore is the name of it called Babel" i.e. confusion (see Genesis 11). In like manner the unity for which Christendom is clamouring today will end in "Babylon the Great," on which the judgment of God again will fall (see Rev. 17 and 18). God's call now, as it will be then is "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins . . ." (Rev. 18 : 4). After fifty-nine years of assembly experience, the writer has yet to see one instance where amalgamation with unscriptural religious systems resulted in lasting blessing.

May our loving Heavenly Father give us all grace and wisdom to turn from man and man's ideas, to the unchangeable Word of God, depending entirely on the Holy Spirit of God to "guide us into **all** truth," to "hold fast that which we have," and "to strengthen the things that remain," for "the night is far spent and the day is at hand."

ABRAHAM—FRIEND OF GOD

by **R. WOODHOUSE BEALES**

HAGAR—THE BONDWOMAN

Chapter 16

IN spite of the finality of such promises we now come to the next lapse of Abram and his wife. The poor flesh cannot wait in patience for God's time but must act in independence to try to help on that purpose, which was in reality a frustration of it.

Abram had brought this slave girl out of Egypt when he went down there in the first place and while this act may have been the custom of the land and its nations, or of Egypt, it ill behoved a saint of God with such promises to God to so act. Abram is not the first to hearken to the voice of his wife with disastrous consequences. Here also was discovered Abram's weakness and Sarai's cruelty leading to this poor woman's flight. "Hagar" may mean "runaway" or "wanderer." But God was not going to desert such a needy soul. The two questions the angel puts to her are very cogent and could be asked of any of Adam's poor race. "Whence comest thou and whither wilt thou go?" This linked with the further question in 21 : 17 make an interesting trilogy as applied to the fleeing sinner, and are most pertinent. "Submit thyself" but this is the most difficult thing to do, as Hagar was to discover.

It has been said that this practice of the taking of a fresh "wife" because of barrenness was the custom of the nations, and this may be so but it ill behoves a man of faith to imitate "the nations" from which he has been called to adopt their heathen practices. When we look upon the moslem world which for centuries has been hostile to and a persecutor of God's people, presenting them with "Islam or the sword" we may well recoil with horror from this especially when we can trace the origin of it to this apparently simple act of the patriarch.

There follows, however, a very gracious promise as to the coming son of Abram, his pre-natal name and description, which he later lived up to, and also the well is named, and the birth and naming of Ishmael and age of Abram. It is noteworthy that though here Hagar had found the well of water, yet later when she was cast out she could not again find it, but the lad was likely to die of thirst.

The age of Abram given in the last verse of this chapter and then the first verse of the next.(17) shows that there had been an interval of thirteen years in which no advance nor any appearance of the Lord occurs. Thirteen years of silence. Who has not known of this experience when God has withdrawn because of sin? "Be not silent unto me" cries the Psalmist as well he might, for who knows if and when God will speak again, when we have attempted to take ourselves out of His divine purpose?

The Spirit in the Local Church

by SAMUEL JARDINE

THE absolute essentiality of the Holy Spirit to an Assembly's character is followed by a fourth proposition:—

iv. The Local Assembly is Spirit-indwelt as to its sanctity (1 Corinthians 3 : 16 ; 6 : 19). This fact is demonstrated from both the collective and the personal points of view. The gathering of saints in the Lord's Name is declared to be "temple of God" while the same description is applied to the believer's body. Could a stronger argument be found for purity of life and propriety of conduct than the actual Presence of Him who is called "The Spirit of Holiness." Is there anything more calculated to impose the needful restraint upon all self-will and fleshly propensities? "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you" is certainly more than the knowledge of a doctrine, it is the fact of a Person inhabiting a shrine which must conform in every way to His sacred and holy nature. How could there be room in "the temple of God" for the assertion of human pride, for the vaunted wisdom of man, or for the defilement of lust and sensuality? The warning to each defaulting member of any assembly is solemnly clear: "If any man destroy (or mar) the temple of God, Him will God destroy (or mar), for the temple of God is holy, and such ye are" (1 Corinthians 3 : 17 (R.V.) margin).

The words of Ch. 11 : 30 (R.V.) are a pertinent and penetrating exposition of what is intended. "For this cause," that is: their base and unholy conduct at the Lord's Supper, "many are weak and sickly among you and not a few sleep." How clear it becomes that the gathered company is a responsible unit, the public misconduct of one or more of its members making the whole Sanctuary of God defiled and implicated until the known and clearly attested sin has been investigated and the guilty one judged before the Lord and the assembly. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump . . . therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5 : 6-13). It should be grasped by every one of us that this drastic step has in it the **BASIC PREPARATION** for the delinquent's **RESTORATION AND REINSTATEMENT**.

It is this same unifying and sanctifying Presence that constitutes the local assembly a truly authoritative court of justice in matters relating to the mutual well-being of its mem-

bers. Here, indeed, is a gracious provision by the Lord of the church to eliminate the need for recourse to the Civil Courts when injustices or wrongs arise between believer and believer. How sadly, how adversely Christ's testimony to the world through His church has been affected by the display of bitterness and enmity that has at times been seen when Christians have sought the decision of an earthly judiciary! All such, virtually deny their heavenly status, they by-pass the higher court and disobey the clear teaching of the New Testament (1 Corinthians 6). Too often a gulf is created between the parties that is not spanned in time and the legacy of the evil thing is handed down to succeeding generations. When placed in "the scales of the Sanctuary" the causes of such action are often so light! so mean! so sordid! The family feud! The duel of the tongue-thrashers! Perishing possessions! Many of these being issues distorted by hurt feelings and exaggerated by suspicions, gossip and the inevitable trouble-maker. And yet they claim to be a living part of a sacred Sanctuary indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God and vested with healing and restorative powers. Among other remedial measures the Apostle proposes, he issues the challenge, "why not RATHER take wrong? why not RATHER be defrauded? Those who are Christ-like enough to do this put a tremendous responsibility upon the offenders and will in due course be vindicated by the righteous Judge. (See Isaiah 54 : 17.)

It is to be expected that attention will now be directed to the individual as in the background there are sins against the physical body of the believer. The human body was being prostituted to the basest of uses and the sin of fornication is specifically mentioned (6 : 13). Union with Christ (v. 15), the inliving of the Holy Spirit and the essential rights of their great Redeemer are urged as the counter-measures to immorality. Members of Christ: Temples of the Holy Spirit; purchased by the blood of Christ, it is imperative that they glorify God in their bodies. The holy horror of their crime is conveyed in the Apostle's reprehensive challenge: What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore Glorify God in your body! (1 Corinthians 6 : 19-20.) Personal purity and corporate sanctity are inseparable. The Assembly is what the member makes it. In this sense too, "None of us liveth to himself." (Romans 14 : 7.) (To be continued)

Notes on Peter's Epistles

by WM. RODGERS

PETER'S frequent allusions to acts and sayings of Jesus, to which attention has already been drawn in these "Notes," are nowhere more in evidence than in the closing chapter of his first epistle; and recognition of them will add much to its interest for the careful reader. Indeed the apostle turns our thoughts in that direction in its very first verse, when he speaks of himself as having been a witness of the sufferings of Christ; a reminder which gives weight to what he has previously written on the subject of suffering; and which helps to account for the "therefore" that the R.V., following the oldest MSS., inserts in the verse.

Most of the allusions occurring afterwards in the chapter are to deeds and words associated with what took place immediately before and after Christ's death—with the upper room of Luke 22, and with the lake side of John 21. They are used by Peter here to put in shape what he wishes to say regarding service (vs. 1-4); humility (vs. 5-7); and watchfulness (vs. 8, 9).

UNDER SHEPHERDS

In his exhortation of verse 2, "Feed (R.V., Tend) the flock of God," he is passing on to other under-shepherds in turn the commission, "Feed (R.V. Tend) My sheep," which the Lord had given to himself in John 21:16. This service they are to do, "not by constraint (LIKE A SLAVE) but willingly," "not for filthy lucre (LIKE A HIRELING) but of a ready mind," not as lording it (LIKE A MASTER) . . . but as examples to the flock."

In the warning against "lording it," as well as in the exhortation to humility which follows in verse 5, and the reference to the Devil's activities in verse 8, Peter has evidently in mind what the Lord Jesus said and did on the occasion of the Supper. At that time there had been a strife amongst the disciples about which of them should be accounted greatest (Luke 22:24-27), as there had been at least twice previously (Mark 9:33-35 and 10:41-45); and Jesus rebuked them for it by words in which "lording it" over one another is contrasted with taking the lowly place. He had already even more pointedly rebuked them by His action, described in John

13 : 4-12, of girding Himself with a towel to wash the feet of these quarrelsome disciples of His. Then there followed the announcement that one of their number was about to betray Him ; and this, while it caused self-questioning among them, also stirred up in Peter a vein of self-confidence (John 13 : 37), which brought on him the Lord's solemn warning of Luke 22 : 31, 32 (R.V.), "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath asked to have you (plural), that he might sift you as wheat ; but I made supplication for thee (singular) that thy faith fail not ; and do thou when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren."

THE GIRDLE OF HUMILITY

If with these things in mind, we turn back to 1st Peter 5, we shall have little doubt whence the apostle derived his phrase, "not as lording it over" (v. 3, R.V.) ; and still less as to what occupied his thoughts when he said in verse 5, "All of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another." The very word that he uses, rendered in the A.V. "be-clothed-with," but in the R.V. "gird-yourself-with-to-serve," would itself suggest a reference to the feet-washing of John 13. It is a word which occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, and its basic meaning is "gird-yourself-with-the-overall-which-marks-the-slave-at-work." Even so did Christ gird Himself with the towel in John 13 : 4, 5, giving to His disciples an "example" (v. 15) of what He expressed shortly afterwards in the words of Luke 22 : 27, "I am among you as he that serveth."

The apostle's exhortation in verses 8 and 9 of our chapter, to watchfulness and resistance against the assaults of the Devil, falls into line with what has gone before, if we link it in our thoughts with the Lord's warning to Peter himself on the same subject in Luke 22 : 31, 32 ; a warning given immediately after His words on that occasion concerning humility and its reward. Having experienced the attack of Satan against which he had then been forewarned, he is the better able to carry out the injunction which was at the same time given him to "strengthen" (R.V., "stablish") his brethren ; and that is what in these verses he is endeavouring to do. Indeed he makes use of this same word "stablish," when in verse 10 he encourages the saints by telling them that "the God of all grace . . . shall Himself . . . stablish . . . you." And it may also be noticed that Christ's prayer for Peter, that his FAITH should not fail, corresponds with the latter's de-

sire for the saints, that in resisting the Devil they should be steadfast in their FAITH.

RESIST THE DEVIL

The emphasis thus laid in both cases on their faith, should remind us that one of Satan's chief aims in his assaults on the people of God, is to shake their confidence in Him, whether by their sufferings, or by dread of having to suffer, or by some other means. This aim is perhaps most clearly seen in his dealings with Job ; but that he failed to accomplish it is just as evident, from such sayings on Job's part as " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him " (Job 13 : 15). He will fail in our case too, if we heed the exhortation of Peter, " Whom resist steadfast in your faith," and that of Paul in a passage that in an earlier paper was mentioned as a parallel one with this, " Withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one " (Eph. 6 : 11 R.V.). (To be continued)

STUDIES IN THE TABERNACLE

The Boards (Exodus 26 : 15-30)

by RAY DAWES

WE come now to the framework of the tabernacle. This comprised 48 boards of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, each board having two tenons slotted into two sockets of silver on which it stood. Twenty boards along the South side and the North side respectively, and six at the rear of the West side with an extra board at each end to act as strengthening corner pieces.

The boards formed the structure of God's dwelling place. Immediately we are led to think of our position as believers forming the house of God, the Church. The wood from which the boards were made had to be sought, cut down low, stripped of its proud branches and shaped to fit the tabernacle. Is not this the work of God's Spirit in the World ? Seeking souls, laying them low in repentance, stripping them of all they are in the flesh, and fashioning them for God's presence. Through the Cross of Christ this work is being accomplished. Shittim (or Acacia) wood is of a twisted, hard, knotted variety and difficult to work with. Let us realise that naturally our hearts are like this, and may it cause us to yield more to the action of God's Spirit.

Once shaped to size the boards were overlaid with gold.

How expressive this is of the believer being 'in Christ.' All the perfection and moral glory of the Lord Jesus is reckoned to us. Before God we stand upright, accepted in the beloved. What rest this gives the soul! All I am in Adam is out of sight, Christ in His glittering glory alone is seen. There were 48 boards and it is remarkable that the phrase 'in Christ' appears 48 times in the New Testament. Such is our heavenly standing; may we be more conformed to Christ in our daily state.

The boards were inserted by means of the tenons into the silver sockets. This enabled them to stand upright. Exodus 30 : 11-16 tell us where this silver came from (cf. Exodus 38 : 27)). The sockets were constructed from the atonement money. A census of the people (all over 20 years) was ordered by God. As each one was counted, that is presented before God as one of His people, a half shekel of silver had to be offered to acknowledge the fact that a price had to be paid for them to be numbered amongst God's people. It was for the atonement of their souls. The rich could not give more, the poor could not give less. The payment averted God's judgment. Later when David numbered the people and did not obey this rite, many perished. Having discerned this, the silver sockets undoubtedly speak of the ground upon which we stand in the presence of God, redemption ground. Not a price we have paid of silver or gold, but a price another has paid, the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1 : 18). This is our perfect standing, but being bought with such a price, it should lead us to glorify God (1 Corinthians 6 : 20).

Every Israelite was therefore represented before God in the sockets, for each had a share in the silver. He could continue to dwell among them on this basis. We have a share in the blood of Christ, not in the same sense of contributing to it, but certainly in the sense that the blood and the blood alone secures the eternal acceptance of every soul who has exercised saving faith. They are all henceforth represented in its abiding preciousness to the eye and heart of God.

The boards were all of the same size. Every believer is a saint, and a priest, not one is any bigger than the other so far as standing is concerned. There are distinctions of gift and responsibility but all are alike 'in Christ.' 'All ye are brethren . . . standing together, side by side, they were linked by four bars passing through rings attached to some of the boards, and a fifth unseen bar passing through the midst of the boards.'

Does not this suggest to us the unifying effects of the Spirit of God? Here is a divine unity and security. The Spirit indwelling the believer effects a vital though invisible link between Christians. In a more outward and practical way the gifts of the Spirit are given to unite the saints (Ephesians 4: 7-11). This is a matter for diligent application. Let each of us serve one another exercising the gifts God has given to promote unity in the local assembly that it might be a place where God is pleased to dwell. (To be continued)

Notes by the Committee

Doubt sees the obstacle, Faith sees the way;

Doubt sees a long dark night, Faith sees the day!

Doubt dreads to take a step, Faith soars on high,

Doubt thunders: "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I."

"Who is sufficient for these things? for we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." 2 Cor. 2: 16-17; 3: 5.

The past year with its lawlessness and confusion around us here, opened our eyes to see something of the dreadfulness of the anarchy which will shortly spread over this poor wicked world, following our Lord's return for His redeemed people. Significant changes invade the homes of the masses, where, it appears, arrogant children demand that the 'ignorant' parents obey the children! Many other developments of wickedness grieve the souls of the people of God. That which should give us most concern is the real danger that the spirit of lawlessness and discontentment so active in the world may invade our assemblies. Let us ever remember that the assembly of saints is the only place in this sad world where the Lordship of Christ is acknowledged. In the assembly is to be found an order to which God can direct the attention of angels, and by the assembly is made known the manifold wisdom of God. (See 1 Cor. 11: 10. 1 Peter 1: 12. Eph. 3: 10.)

We know that which is profitable in the preservation of the saints, individually and collectively, is the Word of God, and we are thankful for evidence that this little magazine has been used by God to this end through another year. For the ministry given through its pages we praise our faithful God.

Our weakness and limitations are acknowledged. We have our testings. For a period the postal workers' strike isolated us from our many friends. As to be expected, costs of material and labour and postal charges increased. However, we are glad to report the magazine is read in the five Continents of earth, and circulation reached its highest ever during this past year. We have again proved the faithfulness of a kind Father, through Whose grace all our needs were met. With joy we believe it is His will to continue this little service another year. He is worthy of our trust.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" "Our sufficiency is of God." We give Him the glory that is His due.

We feel indebted to all those who remember us in their prayers. Be assured we value this greatly. "Pray for us." To those who, after much prayer and study, submitted papers we offer our hearty thanks. The Lord shall yet reward this labour of love. Renewed thanks is offered to our editor for his wisdom, faithfulness and labour revealed in his honorary services which have been continued so consistently in the midst of his many other commitments. The Lord shall duly reward him. It also affords us joy to have the valuable help of so many in the distribution of the magazine. To these dear saints, along with those who, through assembly gifts, or personally, have encouraged us by practical fellowship we tender our hearty thanks in the Lord's worthy Name.

NEW READERS are welcomed. For their information we state that the magazine is sent post free on request, through the free-will offerings of the Lord's people. The quantity required can be amended at any time of the year. Where possible, kindly endeavour to obtain copies through the assembly parcel. Bulk despatch reduces costs. It greatly assists us to have names and addresses with postal codes submitted in BLOCK LETTERS. Kindly advise changes of address promptly. Many BACK NUMBERS are now out of print. Such as remain are available on request, post free. Please AVOID WASTE AT ALL TIMES. Endeavour to introduce the magazine in your assembly, and to any Christian who may benefit by it.

May our gracious God be pleased to bless "Assembly Testimony" to all our readers in 1972, or until our glorious Lord come.

EDITOR: A. M. S. Gooding.

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Peace

*There is a peace that cometh after sorrow,
Of hope surrendered, not of hope fulfilled ;
A peace that looketh not upon to-morrow,
But calmly on the tempest that is stilled.*

*A peace that lives, not in joy's excesses,
Nor in the happy life of love secure ;
But in the unerring strength the heart possesses,
Of conflicts won when learning to endure.*

*A peace there is in sacrifice secluded,
A life subdued; from will and passion free,
'Tis not the peace that over Eden brooded,
But that which triumphed in Gethsemane.*

*The peace of God that passeth understanding,
When God's will differs from our own,
We trust Christ still, with faith erect unbending,
'Tis then He sends rich blessing from His throne.*

Evangelical Dilemma

by WM. MACDONALD

TH**ERE** is a curious problem today in the evangelical world—one that poses sobering questions for the church and for the individual believer. The problem in brief is this: a great army of personal soul-winners has been mobilized to reach the populace for Christ. They are earnest, zealous, enthusiastic, and persuasive. To their credit it must be said that they are on the job. And it is one of the phenomena of our times that they rack up an astounding number of conversions. Everything so far seems to be on the plus side.

But the problem is this. The conversions do not stick. The fruit does not remain. Six months later there is nothing to be seen for all the aggressive evangelism. The capsule technique of soul winning has produced stillbirths.

What lies at the back of all this malpractice in bringing souls to the birth? Strangely enough it begins with the valid determination to preach the pure gospel of the grace of God. We want to keep the message simple—uncluttered by any suggestion that man can ever earn or deserve eternal life. Justification is by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law. Therefore, the message is “only believe.”

From there we reduce the message to a concise formula. For instance, the evangelistic process is cut down to a few basic questions and answers, as follows:

“Do you believe you are a sinner?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe Christ died for sinners?”

“Yes.”

“Will you receive Him as your Saviour?”

“Yes.”

“Then you are saved!”

“I am?”

“Yes, the Bible says you are saved.”

At first blush the method and the message might seem above criticism. But on closer study we are forced to have second thoughts and to conclude that we have oversimplified the gospel.

The first fatal flaw is the missing emphasis on repentance. There can be no true conversion without conviction of sin. It is one thing to agree that I am a sinner; it is quite another thing to experience the convicting ministry of the

Holy Spirit in my life. Unless I have a Spirit-wrought consciousness of my utterly lost condition, I can never exercise saving faith. It is useless to tell unconvicted sinners to believe on Jesus—that message is only for those who know they are lost. We sugar-coat the gospel when we de-emphasize man's fallen condition. With that kind of a watered-down message, people receive the Word with joy instead of with deep contrition. They do not have deep roots, and though they might endure for a while, they soon give up all profession when persecution or trouble comes (Matthew 13 : 21). We have forgotten that the message is repentance toward God as well as faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

A second serious omission is a missing emphasis on the Lordship of Christ. A light, jovial mental assent that Jesus is Saviour misses the point. Jesus is first Lord, then Saviour. The New Testament always places His Lordship before His Saviourhood. Do we present the full implications of His Lordship to people? He always did.

A third defect in our message is our tendency to keep the terms of discipleship hidden until a decision has been made for Jesus. Our Lord never did this. The message He preached included the cross as well as the crown. "He never hid His scars to win disciples." He revealed the worst along with the best, then told His listeners to count the cost. We popularize the message and promise fun.

The result of all this is that we have people believing without knowing what they believe. In many cases they have no doctrinal basis for their decision. They do not know the implications of commitment to Christ. They have never experienced the mysterious, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

And of course we have others who are talked into a profession because of the slick salesmanship techniques of the soul-winner. Or some who want to please the affable, personable young man with the winning smile. And some who only want to get rid of this religious interloper who has intruded on their privacy. Satan laughs when these conversions are triumphantly announced on earth.

I would like to raise several questions that might lead us to some changes in our strategy of evangelism.

First of all, can we generally expect people to make an intelligent commitment to Christ the first time they hear the gospel? Certainly, there is the exceptional case where a person

has already been prepared by the Holy Spirit. But generally speaking, the process involves sowing the seed, watering it, then sometime later reaping the harvest. In our mania for instant conversion, we have forgotten that conception, gestation, and birth do not occur on the same day.

A second question: can a capsule presentation of the gospel really do justice to so great a message? As one who has written several gospel tracts, I confess to a certain sense of misgiving in even attempting to condense the good news into four small pages. Would we not be wiser to give people the full presentation as it is found in the Gospels, or in the New Testament?

Thirdly, is all this pressure for decisions really scriptural? Where in the New Testament were people ever pressured into making a profession? We justify our practice by saying that if only one out of ten is genuine, it is worth it. But what about the other nine—disillusioned, bitter, perhaps deceived enroute to hell by a false profession.

And I must ask this: is all this boasting about conversions really accurate? You've met the man who solemnly tells you of ten people he contacted that day and all of them were saved. A young doctor testified that every time he goes to a new city, he looks in the phone book for people with his last name. Then he calls them one by one and leads them through the four steps to salvation. Amazingly enough, every one of them opens the door of his heart to Jesus. I don't want to doubt the honesty of people like this, but am I wrong in thinking that they are extremely naive? Where are all those people who are saved? They cannot be found.

What it all means is that we should seriously re-examine our streamlined, capsule evangelism. We should be willing to spend time teaching the gospel, laying a solid doctrinal foundation for faith to rest on. We should stress the necessity for repentance—a complete about-face with regard to sin. We should stress the full implications of the Lordship of Christ and the conditions of discipleship. We should explain what belief really involves. We should be willing to wait for the Holy Spirit to produce genuine conviction of sin. Then we should be ready to lead the person to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we do this, we'll have less astronomical figures of so-called conversions, but more genuine cases of spiritual rebirth.

Notes on Peter's Epistles

by WM. RODGERS

There is scarcely any New Testament book, of which the authorship and inspiration have been more frequently assailed by critics and would-be critics, than the second epistle of Peter; and yet there is scarcely any that will more readily satisfy spiritual men, as to its genuineness in both respects. They cannot read it without feeling that it is Peter and none other who is addressing them; nor can they read it without feeling that it is God Himself who is speaking to them through His servant.

Attention has at times been drawn to how greatly it differs from 1st Peter; but similar differences exist between 1st and 2nd Corinthians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, and 1st and 2nd Timothy, these being due in each case to development and in some degree change of subject. It has also been suggested that its second chapter is too much an imitation of Jude's epistle to be the work of a greater than he; but we have already pointed out that this close similarity in certain passages to other writers, is even more prominently a feature of Peter's first epistle.

SECOND PETER

1st Peter had been written to "the elect, sojourners of the Dispersion," in some provinces of Asia Minor, a designation which, as was remarked, would hint that the writer had more especially in view the Jewish saints in those places. 2nd Peter is addressed more widely, "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." No territorial limits are mentioned; and the form of expression employed might suggest Gentile converts, the "us" referring to the Jewish ones. But it is evident from the words he uses in chapter 3: 1 that the apostle has the same readers before his mind in both letters; and this is confirmed by the same mention in the following verse of "Your apostles" (See R.V.); a hint that here, as in the first epistle, he is writing to those who had been brought to Christ through the agency of Paul and his companions. It is therefore more probable that the expression in chapter 1: 1 refers, not to Gentile converts as compared with Jewish, but to the general body of the saints who had obtained like precious faith with the original apostles and "eye-witnesses" (ch. 1: 16), of whom Peter himself was one.

When comparing the two epistles together, one is struck by the fact that, while 1st Peter is full of references to suffering for Christ's sake, the words "suffer" and "suffering" do not occur even once in 2nd Peter. This is not because the "fiery trial" of 1st Peter 1 : 6, 7 ; 4 : 12 had come to an end ; for indeed the apostle himself was about to fall a victim to it, as he hints in 2nd Peter 1 : 14. But he had already said all that was necessary upon that subject ; and he has now another message to give the saints before he is taken from them. It is a message of warning as to dangers ahead of a very different kind from the persecution they were now suffering ; dangers arising from the false teachers of chapter 2, and from the scoffers of chapter 3, dangers that, if not withstood, will influence for evil their conduct, and put an end to their progress as saints.

TWO APOSTLES IN ACCORD

This line of things is similar to that taken up by Paul in his last written epistle, the second to Timothy ; and because it is, 2nd Timothy and 2nd Peter much resemble each other ; as may be seen by comparing the references in each to the "last days ;" to the evil teachers that the last days will bring forth ; to the Word of God as a safeguard in the last days and to the conduct which should characterize God's people in the last days. Thus it might be said that, as in his first epistle Peter shows that his general teaching is in full accord with that of Paul, so in his second he lets us see that the latest thoughts of these two great leaders, as to what they should emphasise to the saints just before being removed from them by martyrdom were also in full accord.

When pointing out in a former paper the large number of words and phrases that by their repetition are characteristic of 1st Peter, it was shown that some of them stand out prominently in 2nd Peter also. One such is "Conversation" (behaviour) found in ch. 2 : 7 ("filthy conversation,") and in ch. 3 : 11 ("holy conversation"), while its Greek verbal form occurs in ch. 2 : 18 ("live"). Another is "Grace," the last occurrence of which in the exhortation "Grow in grace" of ch. 3 : 18, puts a fitting topstone on the many references previously made to it by the apostle. And there are various others.

SECOND PETER'S SPECIAL WORDS

But 2nd Peter has noteworthy repetitions of its own ; one interesting example being its exhortations to diligence. In ch.

1 : 10 the saints are urged to make sure that they have started right, in the words, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." In ch. 3 : 14 they are exhorted, on the ground of their future prospects, to "Give diligence (R.V.) that they may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." And in ch. 1 : 5 they are encouraged to fill up the intervening time of testimony by growth in Christian graces ; "Giving all diligence" they are to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and so on. The same word is also used by Peter in ch. 1 : 15 of his own exercise as to providing permanent help for the saints. It is hidden in the A.V. by a different rendering, but is brought out clearly in the R.V., "I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance."

Perhaps of even more interest are the occurrences of the word "godliness," a term that 2nd Peter shares with the Timothy epistles, and which is found nowhere else save in Peter's own gospel address at Acts 3 : 12. This too is hidden by the A.V. in its rendering "holiness," but is shown in the R.V.

In our epistle it has, like the above-mentioned exhortations to diligence, links with the past, present, and future of Christian experience. In ch. 1 : 3 we read that God in saving us has made provision for it, by granting unto us "all things that pertain to life and godliness." In ch. 1 : 7 we are called upon to add it to other graces in which we should be making constant progress. And in ch. 3 : 11 we are to be found manifesting it by the Lord when He comes. This last occurrence is the only place in the N.T. where the word is in the plural (Greek) ; the suggestion being that it is to be manifested in all possible ways and in fullest measure.

FLESH AND BLOOD

ANDREW BORLAND

(John 6 : 53) (Continued)

Second, there was the personal disclosure in a series of undisguised statements.

(1) 'I am the bread of life' (35). That was in answer to the request, 'Lord, evermore gives us this bread.' They had again failed to understand that the impartation and sustenance of spiritual life was more important than eating material bread for maintaining physical life.

(2) 'He that comes to me shall never hunger ; and he that believes in me shall never thirst.' The claim was a personal one which could not be mistaken. Again the minds of the hearers must have been taken back to the wilderness experience of their forefathers, both to the supply of bread in the form of the manna, and to the supply of water from the rock.

The statement gives explicit meaning to 'eating' and 'drinking.' The words are explained by 'cometh' and 'believeth,' appreciating who Jesus is, and appropriating Him as the living Bread. He is the giver of spiritual life. It was the repeated assertion that like the manna He was a gift from the Father and had come down from heaven that provided the cause for murmuring among His audience, and they vigorously protested that they knew His human origin, being ignorant of the great mystery of His birth. They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that he saith, I came down from heaven?' (v. 42).

The Jews of that day were progenitors of the materialistically minded religious people of every generation. They really discount the genuinely spiritual aspects of life, think of Jesus in terms of His humanity only, and consequently cannot taste of Him as the true Bread which came down from heaven. They may 'hunger' and 'thirst,' but those desires are never satisfied because they do not humble themselves to 'come' and do not 'believe' that in the risen Christ there is everything to satisfy every spiritual aspiration. They do not have the gift of everlasting life. They still ask the question, 'How is it that He saith, I came down from heaven?' Doubtful of His Deity, they cannot understand how belief in Him as Son of Man now exalted can bring to them the gift of God.

Our Lord became more explicit and more difficult to understand.

(a) He said plainly, 'I am the bread of life' (48). 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven' (51). The manna was a lifeless material substance. It merely sustained temporarily those who ate it. The generation which partook of it died. The living Bread could impart spiritual life and sustain it. Those who 'ate' that Bread would live for ever and not die (50-51). That was a startling statement.

(b) Even more baffling was the next pronouncement. 'The bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life

of the world' (v. 51). Dulled by a materialistic approach to the subject under discussion, the Jews could not understand the underlying meaning as referring to the death by which spiritual life through forgiveness would be brought to the world. That is why they asked the question the answer to which was even still more bewildering. The question was, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' and the answer was in the strangest of words. 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he who eats me, even he shall live by me' (vv. 53-57).

Ellicott's Commentary throws light on the passage. 'It was now the time of their Paschal Feast (verse 4), when Jewish families were assembling to eat the flesh which told of deliverance from Egyptian bondage and the birth of the nation's life. Every day of Temple service told of flesh given in sacrifice for sin, and eaten in the maintenance of the individual life. His words, uttered at this Passover and fulfilled at the next, announce a gift of His own flesh as the true Paschal Lamb, as the sacrifice for the sins of the world, and as the sustenance of the true life of mankind.'

A simple analysis of our Lord's statement should provoke thoughtful consideration of its content and intent.

(1) Eating His flesh and drinking His blood means the acknowledgment of His divine-human personality, and the personal appropriation of His death as a sacrifice for sin.

(2) Unwillingness to make that acknowledgment and enjoy the result of that appropriation means that a person has no spiritual life in him.

(3) Those who acknowledge and appropriate have 'eternal life.'

(4) For such there is an intimacy of union, for Christ says of such, 'he dwells in me, and I in him.'

(5) If a person abides in Christ, he will live by Him, that is there has been imparted to him the principle of a new life which is nurtured by fellowship with Him whose flesh is food indeed and whose blood is drink indeed.

(6) The possession of that new life is the guarantee of re-

surrection, for said the Lord, 'I will raise him up at the last day.'

Blessed, indeed, are all those who by faith with thanksgiving 'eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man!' At the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 16: 11, 23-26) there is the constant reminder as we break the bread and drink the cup that the source of eternal life is in the sacrifice of the Son of God, and that spiritual life is sustained by personal appropriation of the provision made in fellowship with the exalted Lord. It is the recognition of that aspect of the Lord's Supper which acts as a deterrent against its becoming a mere formality devoid of meaning.

RECOVERY AND ORDER (2)

by **BRYAN SMITH**

A parallel drawn from the Book of Nehemiah and the First Epistle to the Corinthians

BUT some in Nehemiah's day were not able to bear the reproach and opposition that was connected with their position as part of a despised company. "And Judah said, the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall" (Neh. 4, v. 10). The apostle Paul reminds servants that they are responsible to the Head of the church to manage and deliver the truths of God (1 Cor. 4, vv. 1, 2). Brethren, make your judgment when the Lord comes! (v. 5). Clearly that will then be superfluous. "Then shall every man (as true Judahs) have praise of God." Not the premature praise sounded in the ears of favourite teachers. The Corinthians were giving the impression that the time of reproach and suffering was over, they were reigning as kings (v. 8). Adds the apostle "without us" (and without the Lord). "Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst and ——." I didn't know that the day of triumph had begun! Is it not so, brethren, that there is reluctance on the part of some to accept assembly position of identification with a rejected Lord, outside the camp, because of the reproach and conflict that such a position brings?

Nehemiah took steps to see that the work continued and encouraged his brethren to untiring service by personal example and by those that followed him. "So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servant, nor the men of the guard which

followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that everyone put them off for washing" (Neh. 4, v. 23). Paul cites his own example, and that of Timothy, in entreating the Corinthians to faithfulness, for a father can expect his children to copy his example. "Who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every assembly" (1 Cor. 4, v. 17).

Progress in building the wall is temporarily interrupted due to difficulties arising, not this time from without, but from within. "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews" (Neh. 5, v. 1). The rich had used the poverty condition of their brethren to further oppression. "And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words" (v. 6). Nehemiah directs "restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them" (v. 11). He could speak thus as being clear himself, "but so did not I; because of the fear of God" (v. 15). The internal strife was due to the forgetfulness of relationship. Five times the bond of "brother" is mentioned (vv. 1, 5, 7, 8, 10).

At Corinth there was no "great cry" although the apostle calls for a whole moral reformation among themselves (1 Cor. 5, vv. 7, 8). There had been a "great cry" when personally wronged and lawsuits were the result (1 Cor. 6, vv. 1-8). Assembly discipline has regard to the honour of Christ and the sanctity of God's sanctuary, not that of wrong personally received. But how do we understand the words "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus?" (1 Cor. 5, v. 5). Some take it to be simply from the assembly, where God dwells; to the world, where Satan rules (Clarke, Heading). But this seems insufficient. "The offender reckoning himself to be dead indeed unto sin" (Heading). But in Romans 6, v. 6, the apostle uses a different word from that here. The infliction of bodily illness by Satan to remove carnal appetite ultimately resulting in death if no repentance (Vine, Godet). He is given up presently but not eternally. His body not saved, his spirit would be. The apostle speaks of "within" of local assembly fellowship although some today seem unable to recognise this fact. From this he turns to their

permitting those "without" to judge those "within." The least among the saints should be able to judge comparatively trivial matters (Heading, Lias, Grant) (v. 4). Paul is astonished "do you seek judgment from outsiders?" Such being implied in the words "of no account in the church" (R.V. Meyer, Vine). Sarcasm—"if you have men that are made of no account in the church set these on the bench; shame if you regard some thus." Gravely—"Is it so there is no wise man . . . such a lack of men of sense among you with all your talent and pretensions" (Findlay). The apostle concludes with a warning against impurity (1 Cor. 6, vv. 9-20). The marriage union is of God (v. 16). This leads to a consideration of the subject of marriage and celibacy in chapter 7.

Having established again internal harmony, Nehemiah reports his continuance in the work of building the wall (Neh. 5, v. 16) only to meet with fresh opposition in the form of a request, "come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono" (Neh. 6, v. 2) (the valley of craftsmen, Neh. 11, v. 35). Nehemiah's answer is firm, "and I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort: and I answered them after the same manner" (Neh. 6, vv. 3, 4). May we, brethren, appreciate that the service of God is of prime importance and that attending upon the things of God is a great work.

The apostle begins his answers to the Corinthian questions by considering, firstly, the forming of the marriage bond (1 Cor. 7, vv. 1-9). Celibacy is the higher ideal but marriage will be the rule not the exception. He continues with question relative to the loosing of the marriage bond (vv. 10-24). For the believing couple the Lord has forbidden divorce (vv. 10, 11). Paul directs v. 12 as to the new situation arising from the preaching of the gospel. Where the unbelieving spouse refuses to remain with the believer and divorce proceedings follow, the believer is quietly to accept this. "A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases" (v. 15). That is, he is not to mourn unduly the separation, thinking that conversion is more difficult now, for he cannot say with certain knowledge that salvation would have resulted had she remained (v. 16). But what of the believer divorced before conversion? The

Lord took account of the situation when calling such in the gospel (v. 17). But let him not seek another marriage (v. 24). Paul concludes by presenting to virgins and widows the advantages of being free from the marriage bond (vv. 25-40). Some are not happy about the A.V. rendering of v. 36 and prefer "his own virginity" (Darby, Grant). But it is the father giving his daughter in marriage who is in view. "He might, no doubt, have done better for his child's happiness; but he has not made himself liable to any reproach" (Godet). The father decides for his daughter. The widow for herself "to whom she will; only in the Lord" (v. 39). This liberty of judgment the apostle extends to the question of food offered to idols in chapter 8. There was real spiritual danger in participating in a feast in the temple of idols. The weak brother must be preserved (vv. 9-13). But what of the strong brother's own conduct in sitting at a banquet in such a place? Paul does not divert from his subject. He will deal with this in chapter 10.

ABRAHAM—FRIEND OF GOD

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES

HOLINESS

Chapter 17

BEFORE we approach this section which deals with a change of course and a new name, circumcision and the promise, it is necessary for us to see the necessity for the believer to learn the lessons here enshrined which are so often overlooked. The enjoyment of the position and state of justification by faith precedes and introduces us to the walk of holiness. There should of course be no long interval between the two although often alas, there is, but the first is immediate and cannot be repeated whereas the latter is to be the entrance to a life long "walk." It is just here that believers often go astray, although the two are clearly defined in the teaching of the New Testament.

If we are going to be spiritually fruitful and also intercessors then it is absolutely essential that these preliminary experiences be true of us.

We now come to the second appearance to Abram of which there are three, the first in Chapter 12, v. 7, containing the first promise of the land where he builds the first altar, here in chapter 17, for the call to holiness, and lastly in 18. 1. But

this is another call "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me and be thou perfect" for Abram's walk recently had been far from that, the flesh had sadly marred it. Here is another fresh discovery of the Name of Jehovah, "El Shaddai". Some have interpreted this as "All sufficient" rather than "Almighty" but this description is open to doubt. God was speaking of His almighty power to bring about what He had promised and not His all-sustaining grace. He is about to change Abram's and also Sarai's names and characters and to reiterate His wonderful promises and while He speaks of the many nations to come out from Abraham, yet it is the "Seed" which is now prominent not yet in the singular "thy seed which is Christ" (Gen. 22 : 17.) but the nations and kings which should emanate from Abraham, and also the land, all the land of Canaan. This is a specific and unconditional covenant and promise, but it has to do with earth (Canaan) and nations and the land.

Abraham, however, is to observe this covenant in a special way and it is as if God is saying to him, "You can stop trying to bring about My promises by the works of the flesh" you must "walk before Me, and be perfect" for his walk and ways had been anything but that, but now he is called to a path of holiness, thus the change of name and character, and so circumcision is prescribed. This is all, as Paul points out in his epistles, before the law, and the original promise and covenant is before circumcision, this is the argument in all his epistles, especially those dealing with Gentile believers, see Rom. 4. 9-17, which deals not only with the law of Moses, but the prior circumcision. But here the flesh has to be dealt with, and the sign must be given and applied to all in his house and throughout the generations. It is not only the Cross-work of Christ which has fulfilled all this and rendered it now ineffective and unnecessary. Indeed to apply circumcision today would be to cut oneself off from Christ, and He would profit us nothing. See Galatians 5 : 2, 3, also Rom. 2 : 25, 29, and 4 : 9-12. So great and complete is the work of Christ upon the cross.

It must also be noted that any person who broke this covenant of circumcision did not thereby set aside the covenant of grace made to Abraham (in ch. 15) but only suffered by being "cut off" from God's people.

The promise of God concerning Sarah now follows, vv.

15-19 and Abraham laughs because of the impossibility of it even as Sarah laughs later at its repetition (18 : 12-15). Some have said that this laughter of Abraham was in faith while that of Sarah was in unbelief, but the record admits of no such thing. There is that which he said in his heart and what he said to the Lord, and the latter "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee" i.e. as his heir, proves the matter. But God repeats it and pre-names Isaac which means "laughter" and repeats that the covenant will be with him and his seed after him.

God also gives a promise to Ishmael, which He had previously given to Hagar before his birth and speaks of his seed, but the covenant, even though Ishmael is circumcised, is with Isaac, which shews **that one must not confuse the two things.**

Studies in the Tabernacle

The Lampstand (Exodus 35 : 31-40) **by RAY DAWES**

THE Lampstand consisted of a central shaft with three branches coming out of each side. It was made from one piece of pure gold of beaten work, exquisitely engraved with knops (buds) and flowers with cups of almond at the extremities to take the oil for the light. It was the costliest and most beautiful of all the holy vessels.

The purpose of the lampstand was to give light in the holy place. Natural light could not penetrate so the lampstand was alight continually ch. 27, 20. It illuminated the other vessels, the table of shewbread and the golden altar, as well as the walls and tabernacle roof, and in its light the priests accomplished their service. The light is an apt emblem of the Holy Spirit of truth, and the oil used so often in the anointing of priests and kings, also prefigures the Holy Spirit 1 John 2, 20. The number 7 connected with the candlestick here, would remind us of the seven spirits of God, and the seven lamps of fire spoken of in Revelation 3, 1 and Ch. 4, 5—the Spirit of God in the fulness of His power. The teaching is plain therefore. To apprehend and appreciate spiritual things we must be enlightened by the Spirit. Natural reason cannot receive the things of God, its feeble light fails to understand.

The lights were also cast upon the candlestick itself revealing its beauty. The candlestick is of course, Christ. The fulness of the Spirit dwelt in Him; the buds and flowers

suggest His fruitfulness and fragrance to God ; the gold of beaten work expresses His divine nature which experienced all the sufferings of His humanity. He was **the** light of the World. The purpose of the Spirit now is illuminate all the glories of the Lord Jesus and magnify Him.

Believers are responsible to reflect the light Phil 2, 14-15, as individuals and collectively as assemblies cf. the golden lampstands of Rev. 1. As the priest maintained the light in the holy place, so Christ now as our heavenly Priest maintains the witness of believers and assemblies by His care and intercession. The holy place in communion with God, is where we see by the Spirit, the light of divine truth. In thy light, shall we see light, Ps. 36, 9 ; cf. Ps. 73, 17.

The Spirit in the Local Church

by SAMUEL JARDINE

v. **The Local Assembly is Spirit-equipped as to its functions.**

(1 Corinthians 12). This important chapter shows the four outstanding features of a Spirit-controlled Assembly :

(1). The Lordship of Christ is assured. There is obviously a complete reversal of a former state of affairs. In the dark days of superstition these Corinthians had been "CARRIED AWAY to dumb idols, even as they had been led." Evil spirits who had dominated and directed them had been evicted and annulled by the incoming of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, no one held and swayed by the new Occupant of their hearts, (as those demons had done), would ever oppose or anathematize (that is, curse) the Lord Jesus. Indeed, this inliving Holy Spirit creates desires to own and honour Him and secure His rightful place in confession and conduct. In His domain and dominion, "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Thus in "the SPIRITUALS" (v. 1. lit) the Lord Jesus is the recognised supreme authority which is precisely what Lordship means ; His absolute right to administer and control His Own Assembly.

(2). The Gifts of the Risen Lord will be in evidence.

(1 Cor. 12 : 4, 5, 6.) They are set out for us in a three-fold way, first as to their origin ; the Holy Spirit, second as to their ordering ; the Lord Jesus, and third as to their operation : by the work of God which brings us to the high-water mark of spiritual co-operation, the lovely harmony possible through the blessed Trinity.

i. **ORIGIN.** v. 4 "Varieties of gifts but the same Spirit."

Who is the Author of a spiritual capacity for any given work? The answer is simply, the Holy Spirit, For instance, He begets Shepherd affection and ability such as were seen in Peter. (John 21 : 15-17). The exhorter, like Barnabas, is also a man imbued with the Spirit. Godly leadership can be developed where least expected when the Spirit has His way. Always it is "the same Spirit" who produces the gifts.

- ii. **ORDERING.** v. 5 "Varieties of ministeries (or services) but the same LORD." The gifts being present, where and when shall they be employed? It is the blessed Lord who places them and indicates their services. A glad and ready obedience on the part of the gifted one will imply His authority and explain the humility and dependence with which His "services" are rendered.
- iii. **OPERATION.** "Varieties of workings but the same God who worketh all things in all." (V. 6. R.V.) The effectiveness of the gifts is finally stated. The three Persons harmoniously involved in the production, the mastery and the impact of these gifts is surely an inspiring thought. Believers with spiritual powers being controlled by the Lord Jesus and their God-given success present a standard for any Assembly at anytime. As this ideal unfolds it allows of no loop-hole of escape, there is a function, private or public, for every member of the local church.

(3). The "Hall-mark" of the Spirit will be seen. (1 Cor. 12 : 7-12). With every manifestation of the Spirit comes an indubitable proof of its reality. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each for profit." (v. 7) Nine such clear operations are here specified, and set out, one would believe in their order of "profit" to the church ; the best gifts (12 : 31) "Wisdom" is really applied "knowledge" and "faith" no doubt is that which is attributed to men like Stephen (Acts 6 : 3-5) who possibly had other aptitudes as well. Their valuable contributions are clearly stated. The healer and miracle worker had a spiritual as well as a physical side to their services. The New Testament prophet is well represented in Agabus. He was more than a preacher being given his message for the Saints by direct revelation (Acts 11 : 28, 20 ; 10. 1 Cor. 14 : 31). Both Peter and Paul illustrate for us "the discerning of spirits" which was by no means confined to Apostles. (Acts 8 : 23, 13 : 9, 1 John 4 : 1). In centres like

Corinth the gifts of tongues and their interpretation were not only used but because of their somewhat spectacular nature were being exploited while those of greater profit were being somewhat discounted as a consequence. To all at Corinth the Apostle is making clear the relative importance of every manifestation of the Spirit.

Any careful student of these facts will connect the abnormal gifts of healings, miracles, tongues and interpretations with the period and purpose of "the Apostles and Prophets" and interpret their presence in the light of the great supernatural change-over, the need for its establishment internally and eternally, and particularly the need for the rounding-off of New Testament teaching. Just as the Apostles and Prophets are no longer with us (Ephes. 2 : 20) so also the Sign-gifts were faded out when their purpose had been fulfilled, and their day of usefulness had been ended. The whole of the teaching of "the Apostles and Prophets" is long since embodied in our perfected New Testament: a revelation so complete as to require nothing but gifted men to unfold and interpret it as enlightened by its Author.

The same principle, however, remains that every true manifestation of the Spirit has His "Hall-mark" upon it. It is given for the PROFIT of the household of faith. We profit God's people only when we EDIFY them, that is build them up, when we EXHORT them, that is, stir them up, or when we COMFORT them or lift them up. (1 Cor. 14 : 3, 29 in principle.)

THE THINGS WHICH ARE

by Dr. JOHN BOYD

PORTRAIT OF THE JUDGE

(Rev. 1 : 12-18)

'A REVELATION' is the literal rendering of the title of this book; it was a revelation that God commissioned His Son, Jesus Christ, to pass on to others; it was also a revelation of the Lord as a judge. The Revelation is divided into three parts (v. 19), (1) What John saw, that is, the vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as Judge in chap. 1, (2) 'The things which are', that is, the Lord's judgment concerning seven churches on earth, (3) 'The things which shall come to pass hereafter', lit., after these things. It consists in the Lord's future judgment of men on earth, after the churches' earthly judgment is completed, and the Church has

been removed thence.

The apostle John finds himself on Patmos, as to bodily presence ; he is in spirit, as to faculty consciousness. His spirit, that part of his being that reaches after the things of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8 : 16, 1 Cor. 2 : 14), was being exercised to the exclusion of his other faculties—his body and his soul. This meaning of the words 'in the spirit', lit., in spirit (the absence of the article indicating the character of the experience), is in keeping with the three other occurrences of these two words in the book (Rev. 4 : 2, 17 : 3, 21 : 10). Such a state was necessary for the full estimation of the great visions he was about to receive. For the believer to-day such a detachment from worldly ambitions and occupations makes for clearer vision to appreciate divine glories. May God enable us to be truly sensitive of this vision John had of the Lord.

John first mentions hearing a great trumpet-like voice, a voice of emphatic clarity, giving him instructions to transmit a record of what he was about to see and hear—all the visions of the book (1 : 4), further subdivided in 1 : 19. In response to this command he turned to see the voice, a figure of speech called metonymy, whereby an attribute is substituted for the person meant, that is, he turned to see from whom the voice came.

Having turned, his attention was drawn to seven golden lampstands (R.V.m.). But his vision became fixed on a figure in the midst of the lampstands, on One like unto a son of man (R.V.). The words 'son of man' are here without the definite article, indicating that John is referring not so much to a specific person, but rather to One whose character was that of a son of man. The One in the midst of the lampstands was a man. Henceforth the glories of this Man absorb all John's attention, as he proceeds to describe Him minutely.

John first noticed His clothing (v. 13). He was robed in a garment that descended to His feet, highly reminiscent of the robe of the High Priest of Israel. The same word for robe is used in the Septuagint of Ex. 28 : 31. But this was not a High Priest's robe. There was no mitre, no breastplate, no ephod. True, the High Priest had a girdle round his robe, but round his waist, whilst here the girdle is round the breasts. This was a golden girdle, unlike the girdle of fine twined linen wherewith the High Priest held his garments tightly around him. Thus the robe and girdle here were not

those of a High Priest, but of a judge. The robe is indicative of dignity and power. The girdle was not intended to hold up the robe for priestly service to be carried out, as the robe was seen going down to the feet. It was rather the girdle of judicial authority, as used by the magistrates of those days. That it was of gold suggest divine authority to execute judgment. A similar picture is seen in Rev. 15 : 5-8. There seven angels, 'their breasts girded with golden girdles', have the responsibility of administering the judgment of the wrath of God.

Having shown how the Man in the midst of the lampstands was arrayed John goes on to describe the seven-fold glory of His person, His characteristic attributes. He starts at the head. 'His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow', a description highly reminiscent of that of 'the Ancient of days' of Daniel's vision (Dan. 7 : 9). What John chiefly noticed here was the whiteness, like white wool, like snow—two symbols setting forth purity and holiness (Isa. 1 : 18, Ps. 51 : 7), the attributes of an unbiased and incorruptible Judge.

John next noted the eyes. They were like a flame of fire. A clue to the meaning of this expression is found in chap. 2. The One 'who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire' (v.18), is the One who 'searcheth the reins and hearts' (v. 23). It indicates the keen and penetrating gaze of the Judge whose eye misses nothing, and before whom 'all things are naked and opened' (Heb. 4 : 13). His award will be in accordance with what His eyes see. The Person walking in the midst of the churches sees all things, great and small. Nothing escapes His scrutiny. His eyes encompass the full scope of any failure in a church. They also perceive the motive in the heart of the individual, and know just how much the slightest thought or insinuation of the least of the saints has contributed to the larger issue for good or bad in the church.

The feet are then described. They were 'like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace' (R.V.). In all Greek literature the only occurrences of this word translated 'burnished brass' are here and in Rev. 2 : 18. Its meaning is obscure, but is hinted at in John's explanation—'as it had been refined in a furnace'. It is thus a metal, a bright metal that had been burnished in a refining fiery furnace.

The voice of the Man of John's vision he likens to the sound of many waters—the noise produced by a mighty rushing

torrent—immense, powerful, awe-inspiring, unmistakable, excluding all other voices. Well might His messages inspire fear in men. It was the voice of divine power and majesty (Ps. 29 :4). Such a voice Israel could not endure, and intreated that it be not repeated (Heb. 12 : 19-20).

John then saw in the right hand of this majestic Person seven stars. The right hand suggests the place of control and support. We are not left to our own imagination as to the symbolism of the seven stars. They are explained (v. 20) as representing the angels of the seven churches to whom John must convey the messages of judgment.

The two-edged sword that proceeded out of the mouth of this Man symbolises His judicial power and authority to deal with His enemies. It is used (a) for the protection of the church against the inroads of those who would subvert it (2 : 16), (b) for the destruction of His enemies. The two-edged nature of the sword emphasises its sharpness (Prov. 5 : 4, Heb. 4 :12). It will penetrate deeply into the inmost secrets of men to judge them. Three times in this vision John mentions that which proceeds from His mouth, (a) the clarity of the trumpet-like voice (v. 10), (b) the voice of majestic power (v. 15), (c) the sword-like destruction that His words accomplish. Is this to impress upon men the importance of heeding the messages given ?

“ THOU ” or “ YOU ”

by **HAROLD BAKER**

IT may be argued that if we do not use a Bible translation in modern speech and if our public prayers are not in modern speech, we shall give the impression to the unconverted that we are dealing with that which is unreal or outdated. In addressing persons the word “thou” was used in everyday speech to denote the singular and “ye” to denote the plural. Many years ago this practice ceased and “you” was adopted whether one person or more was being addressed. Some would contend that there is no reason for employing “old-fashioned language” in a Bible translation or in addressing God and that the use today of the word “you” would be consistent with the use in a former day of the word “thou.”

The Authorised Version and certain other translations have preserved by the use of "thou" and "ye" the distinction made in the original languages between singular and plural. It is true, of course, that the pronoun used in addressing God was the same as that used in addressing **any** one person. A modern translation abandoning the use of "thou" may rob us of significant differences between singular and plural forms. For example, the Lord Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with **you** (the disciples), and yet has **thou** (Philip) not known Me?" (John 14 : 9). Again the Lord said, "Satan hath desired to have **you** (the disciples) . . . but I have prayed for **thee** (Simon)" (Luke 22 : 31, 32). For private study other good translations also have their value, but for public reading at gospel meetings we cannot do better than use the Authorised Version. An explanatory comment may be made where necessary. For example, in reading I Thessalonians 4 : 15 we would perhaps explain that "prevent" means "precede." In the course of the years a few words in the Authorised Version have changed their meaning, so far as popular usage is concerned, and a few words have dropped out of everyday speech. These facts do not justify us in regarding the general language of the Authorised Version as old-fashioned or archaic.

Let us take advantage of the fact that in the word "thou" we have in English an intelligible word that by very reason of its uncommon usage has peculiar dignity. Take for example the words of I Chronicles 29, vv. 10 and 11, "Blessed be Thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty : for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine ; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above all." What dignified, reverent and awe-inspiring language is this ! Read the same passage but substitute for "Thou" and "Thine" "You" and "Yours" and the passage is belittled. Something of grandeur, dignity and reverence is lost.

Those who have been born again are God's children and have the right to address Him as Father, but they should do so with reverence and humility. Language appropriate between equals or between fellow-humans is not appropriate in our addressing God. Let us, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, select the most reverent words available to us.

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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Yet I will rejoice in the Lord

(Hab. 3 : 18)

by William Montgomery

I

*Though the fig tree shall not blossom,
And no fruit be on the vine,
Though earth's sweetest harvests fail me,
I am God's and He is mine.*

II

*Tender flocks once clothed the hillside,
Lowing cattle filled the stall ;
If His Hand hath left me empty
'Tis the Hand that giveth all.*

III

*Earthly brooks run dry and vanish,
Still a river deep and broad
Pours its waters o'er the desert,
From the fountain-head of God.*

IV

*'Tis a flow that never faileth ;
Naught can satisfy like this ;
'Tis the love of my Redeemer,
And for ever I am His.*

V

*Since mine eyes have seen His beauty,
Since mine ears have heard His voice,
Let the wilderness surround me—
Yet I will in Him rejoice.*

The Spirit in the Local Church

by SAMUEL JARDINE (Conclusion)

(4). The BODY-character of the local church will be displayed. In finding a basis for local usage the inspired writer resorts to the church as a whole. He needs a concrete picture of unity with variety and where better than in "the Spirit baptized body of the CHRIST." (1 Cor. 12 : 12-13) "Body . . . so also is the CHRIST." At once he proceeds to point out features traceable in a body. A body is an unit and yet is an unity. It is one and yet has many members. This oneness is wholly consistent with its variety. Its very character requires its variety. This provides "the spring-board" for a number of lessons to fellow-members.

First he supposes the ISOLATIONIST policy of "the feet" which because it is not "the hand" is ready to dissociate from the body and similarly "the ear" because it is not "the eye" will not be reckoned in the body. How foolish ! Because I have not the more conspicuous place of one or the more important occupation of another, that I should withdraw my helpfulness from the whole. Next he attacks the very opposite ; the "monopoly policy." Truly a body that is all EYE is a monstrosity and cancels out the variety for which a body stands. No ! God has formed the body whether it be physical or that to which the attention of the Corinthian church is being drawn, their own corporate existence and God has placed each member in its right and unalterable place. For one member to do the work of all, is to rob the other members of their God-given place and Spirit-bestowed function. What is wrong in principle must be wrong in practice so that it can never be the prerogative of one believer to either exercise all the gifts or control them. Such an expedient is either full-blown clerisy or a subtle form of "Dictatorship" closely allied to hypocrisy, for it can masquerade in the garb of orthodoxy and shout loudly about its defence of "Truth." The "BODY" principle demands interdependence of the various members and rules out action which does not take into account the natural place and proper function of another. Mutual dependence and proper co-ordination are a law of life. All are necessary to complete utility, whether head or feet, whether feeble or strong, whether apparently honourable or dishonourable. Can we see that the Apostle has in mind the harmonious working of the Spirit-

controlled Assembly of God, to whom he now says, "Ye are body of Christ and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12 : 27). To achieve any likeness to this there must be an intelligent, willing, affectionate, God-fearing attitude adopted by one and all, which puts value on each and every one within the company. In music there is no such thing as one note saying, "I have no need of thee", so in the harmony which God sees and hears every note will at some time or other be struck and God's heart be gladdened. What an audience we have for our public, collective and silent breathings and ministrations! And how grievous our discords, our rents and disorders to the God of peace and order! It must be clear to the least observant reader of this amazing twelfth chapter of First Corinthians that every phase of Assembly life is in mind as the Body-wise function of the house-hold of faith is pressed home. Among living members what sympathetic and affectionate care the one for the other is bound to exist! What love and consideration breathe in those lovely words; "And whether one member suffer all the members suffer WITH IT : or one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it!" (v. 16). The truth is beautiful, but the truth in action is lovelier still. One has seen it in amazing demonstration when either disaster, bereavement or persecution has come to a fellow believer. A spontaneous out-burst of love in its tenderest and most practical forms expounded this passage as no merely human words could do. And yet again when sunshine displaced the shadow the joy and fellowship of love were in lively evidence. The fragrant anointing oil ran down to the utmost skirts of the priestly garment. The copious dews of Hermon and of Zion flowed in refreshing fulness. Remember, beloved brother and sister in Christ, these "Good and pleasant" things and the out-pouring of God's blessing are conditioned by our personal relations with the Holy Spirit, which in turn mould our attitudes to each other. "Ichabod" is the unseen name of Assemblies where wrong relations between the members and the Spirit are permitted, for verily, "the glory is departed," But where the ideal of Psalm 133 prevails the "Ashers" are in the ascendancy. Here are those who dip their foot in oil and leave an indelible God honouring and Christ exalting witness behind them. Recognise, dear fellow-believer the indispensable part the gracious Holy Spirit plays in your life and in your Assembly and yield unreservedly to His control.

THE THINGS WHICH ARE

by Dr. JOHN BOYD

PORTRAIT OF THE JUDGE (Continued)

(Revelation 1 : 12-18)

John's final observation concerning this Man was that 'His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength'. This must have reminded John of his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, for thus he had seen the glorified Son of Man (Matt. 17 : 2). In this vision he beheld in the countenance of the Man the dazzling blaze of celestial glory upon which no man can look and live (Ex. 33 : 20).

And such was the effect of the vision upon John. He fell in a swoon at the feet of Him who manifested such majesty and glory. This had happened before to those who had got such a vision, and were conscious of their sinful nature in such august presence—to John himself on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17 : 6); to Daniel receiving a similar vision, when his 'comeliness was turned in me into corruption' (Dan. 10 : 8); to Isaiah who said, 'Woe is me! for I am undone' (Isa. 6 : 5); to Saul and his company as they beheld the glory of the risen, ascended Christ above the brightness of the sun (Acts 26 : 13-14). But this Person of dazzling majesty, whose very presence caused John to be afraid, laid His right hand upon him, and with a word of comfort told him not to fear. This was no vain word of re-assurance, for He proceeded to identify Himself to John as 'the first and the last', a title that belongs to God alone—from eternity to eternity (Isa. 44 : 6). The Man of v. 13 is the Jehovah of hosts in v. 17. John recognised Him as the Word who was in the beginning, and who was God (John 1 : 1); the One who promised to be with him 'always, even unto the consummation of the age' (Matt. 28): 20, R.V.m.).

Furthermore, the Object of John's vision described Himself as 'the living One' (R.V.), the One who has life in Himself, having derived it from no one. Again John recognised Him as the One of whom he had written, 'In Him was life' (John 1 : 4). Yet He 'became dead' (R.V.m.), that is, he voluntarily passed into that state. John had borne witness of such an event when he wrote that He 'gave up His spirit' (John 19 : 30, R.V.). When this Person said that He was 'alive for evermore' it indicated that He had triumphed over death. It could never

again claim Him who had risen from the dead. The resurrection of Christ had been the great fundamental truth on which John had proclaimed Christianity. He had beheld the resurrected Jesus ; he had seen the miraculous draught of fishes the Lord had provided ; he had eaten with Him after His resurrection ; he had been taught of Jesus to expect His return. That the Lord was alive for evermore John believed implicitly, for He had given to believers the promise of eternal life (1 John 2 : 25), and that life is in God's Son (1 John 5 : 11).

Finally this glorious Man told John that He had the keys of death and of Hades (the order of the Revised Version). Keys bespeak His authority (3 : 7). He controls death and Hades, and that by reason of His conquest of death, going into it of His own volition, and having the authority to rise again. His control over Hades was evident in that He descended into Hades, and arose the third day. Did not these words concerning the keys remind John of what the Lord said to Martha, 'I am the resurrection, and the life' ? As 'the life' He could promise that whosoever liveth and believeth on Him should never die. As 'the resurrection' He could assure those who believed on Him that though they die yet should they live (John 11 : 25-26). He had the keys of death and of Hades.

What a revelation all this was to John ! Even he who had known the Lord so intimately on earth did not at first recognise Him in such august majesty, but he was left in no doubt as to the identity of the Man of v. 13, for His own description in vv. 17-18 established it firmly in John's mind. The Man of the vision was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. How clearly do all the symbolisms of the vision present themselves to us when seen in Christ ! He was 'son of man', but also Jehovah of hosts. John uses this expression 'son of man' without the article three times as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5 : 27, Rev. 1 : 13, 14 : 14). In each case the emphasis is on His humanity, and relates to His authority to execute judgment. How comforting for us to realise that the Lord still wears our humanity ! As such He will give us confidence amidst the multitudinous glories of heaven. Note the name Jesus in Heb. 12 : 24.

His robe and golden girdle reminded John that the Son of man had the Father's authority to execute judgment (John 5 : 27). The whiteness of His head and hair, telling of His purity and holiness, vindicate His claim to righteous judgment

(John 5 : 30). His eyes like a flame of fire tell us that His judgment is that of One who is a consuming fire (Heb. 12 :29). Do the feet like unto burnished brass suggest the furnace of affliction through which Christ has passed, the feet indicating where He has trodden, what He has passed through for us ? If so, well might the believer bow in contrition at His feet, and humbly submit to His judgment. Or does this burnished brass indicate, as brass in the Old Testament, God's righteous judgment against sin, e.g., the brazen altar (Ex. 27 : 2) ? It might suggest that Christ has passed through judgment for us, and that He walks in the midst of the churches in a path of pure and righteous judgment.

As by faith we listen to His majestic, awe-inspiring voice, like the voice of many waters, we learn to fear the judgment of the Lord, even now as He walks amidst the churches, or later at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5 : 10-11). Well might sinners dread to hear his voice when passing the sentence of the impenitent's doom.

The Lord holds in His hands the angels, the representative messengers of the churches, embodied in the overseers. How encouraging for such to learn that He 'holdeth the stars' (2 : 1) ! The word 'holdeth' implies the use of strength, to hold in one's power, to support. With what confidence John would pass on the messages, knowing that those to whom he wrote were the special objects of the unfailing protection and care of the omnipotent Man of this vision ! What a responsibility thus devolves on those who convey to the churches the messages from the Lord ! They are in His control, and under His authority.

Let us, as we consider the symbolism of the two-edged sword, realise that even to-day His voice penetrates into the inmost recesses of our consciences. This is not the 'sword of the Spirit' (Eph. 6 : 17), but the sword of the Son of man (Rev. 19 : 15). The two-edged nature of the sword, reaching into our inmost secrets. The sword is not the Scripture, but the consuming word spoken in judgment by the Lord.

As the One whose countenance was as the sun shining in its strength we perceive the Lord coming to judge the world. How can men in the day of His fierce wrath (6 : 16) bear the sight of that face from which the heavens and earth flee away ?

John was told to write for our instruction those things he saw that we might learn to appreciate the majesty and judicial

power of the Lord, both in the churches and in His final judgment of the world. Read it again and again, till its very power grips you. Then shall we, like John, be afraid in the presence of such holiness and penetrating gaze. But we, too, can find comfort in the words 'Fear not', as we realise that He who speaks is our Saviour and Lord. He has been through death for our sakes, and is risen from the dead, living evermore to bless and cheer. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

CAMEOS OF CHRIST

by **JOHN B. D. PAGE**

HIS SEAMLESS COAT

THE scriptures refer to the garments of Christ seven times. First, they declare that at His first advent the Babe was wrapped in swaddling clothes (Luke 2 : 12), and lastly at His second coming, as the Warrior-King, He will wear a vesture dipped in blood—blood stains not of the cross but of conflict, an allusion to Isaiah 63 : 3 (see Revelation 19 : 13).

Upon this canvas of His life, a central scene is of the four soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, dividing His garments. These were legal perquisites of soldiers who carried out executions. For the seamless coat, which they did not divide, they cast lots, which, unknown to them, was in fulfilment of Psalm 22 : 18.

John's comment about this under-garment is of interest : "now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout" (John 19 : 23).

The phrase "from the top", found only twice in the New Testament, is akin in the Greek to "from above," which is used to qualify the new birth (John 3 : 3 & 7, R.V.), meaning that it stems from heaven. We are told that the seamless coat was woven "from the top"—"from above," and likewise of the incarnate Christ, John the Baptist declared that He came "from above"—He was "from heaven" (John 3 : 31), by which he meant that Jesus was not only human but also divine. He was God come "from above," and in His Manhood He was clothed with a garment of flesh and blood.

Of the seamless coat, it has been said that it was the type worn by peasants, and yet it was the garb of the Lord from heaven. To us, such a coat is a reminder of the Servant character of Christ, as illustrated by His stooping to wash His disciples' feet, the most menial of tasks for an eastern

slave. In doctrinal terms, Paul expresses the truth as "Christ Jesus, . . . being in the form of God, . . . took upon Himself the form of a servant . . ." (Philippians 2 : 6f). Of the three times that the word "form" is applied to Christ, it is used here twice antithetically with the words "God" and "servant" to express the degree of His humiliation—the great stoop that He made. The word "form" does not denote outward appearance—there was nothing to show outwardly that Christ Jesus was "God" or that He was a "slave," but it signifies the inward and real nature of His Being. His seamless coat of flesh and blood, as it were, concealed His true nature of Deity and, being God eternally, He did not set aside His Deity for the days of His flesh. In His Manhood, He was neither pompous nor haughty, but inwardly, unknown to men around, He assumed the character of a slave, and constantly He walked the path of humility leading to the death of the cross, which He endured, despising its shame.

THE RENT VEIL

With the scene of Calvary in mind, we recall that Jesus finally bowed His head and gave up His spirit, and then "the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27 : 51, and Mark 15 : 38). This was the time of the evening sacrifice (about 3 o'clock in the afternoon) when the priest was in the holy place of the temple burning incense upon the golden altar, which stood before the veil. Although scripture is silent about the priest's reactions, he must have been struck with fear as he saw the veil before him rent, not from the bottom but "from the top." We do not know, but he may have thought that such a happening was of the supernatural realm.

This is the only other occurrence of the phrase "from the top", which is translated "from above" in John 3. Surely, this unusual position for the rending of the veil, recorded by two of the synoptists, denotes that it was not the work of man but of God—that it was the Lord's doing. Hebrews 10 : 20 interprets the veil antitypically, "the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Hence, if the veil is a type of Christ incarnate, then the rent veil signifies Christ crucified.

Whilst we think of man being responsible for crucifying Christ (Acts 2 : 23), thereby displaying his innate sin, we should not overlook the unseen forces of evil arrayed against the crucified Lord (Colossians 2 : 15, Genesis 3 : 15). But,

above all, besides the human and Satanic aspects of His death, there is the divine, for, as the veil was rent "from the top"—"from above," so Christ was "smitten of God" and, Isaiah adds, "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Isaiah 53 : 4 and 10). Quoting Culross, David Baron writes, "Not only did the Lord bruise Him, but it was the "good pleasure of His will" to do so. He, Who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, was pleased to put His righteous Servant to grief—not, of course, because the death-agony was a pleasure to look upon, but as means to the fulfilment of a great purpose." Mysterious as it may be that the Lord smote Him, and miraculous as the rending of the veil "from the top" was, it is surely figurative of the Godward aspect of the death of Christ.

Luke, omitting the other synoptists' remarks, tells us that the veil of the temple was rent "in the midst" (23 : 45), which means that the veil was not rent towards one side but in the middle. This suggests that in the prime of life, in the middle of the allotted span of three score years and ten, Christ was cut off. Does not Isaiah allude to an unexpected death! "Who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living" (53 : 8).

The priest, who witnessed the rending of the veil, would have seen no special significance in it. For him as for all other persons of his day, the veil precluded entry into the presence of God, except for the high priest once a year. For believers, the rent veil has meant the opening of "a new and living way" into the Lord's presence at all times, whilst "within the veil" the Forerunner, even Jesus Christ, has entered for us.

DANIEL THE PROPHET

by **A. J. ATKINS**

His Teaching for These Last Days

Introduction

THE NAME. Daniel means God my judge, and the book deals with God's judgments covering the span of centuries from the period of the exile in Babylon, through the time called by the Lord Jesus "the times of the Gentiles." The visions given and the events recorded took place whilst God's people were suffering judgment in exile, because of their sin.

The general theme of the book is the universal sovereignty of God. It has been the target of unbelieving critics both in

ancient and in modern times, but its authenticity is verified by the testimony of the Lord Jesus to Daniel the prophet (Matthew 24 : 15). It is in two parts and written in two languages. The first chapter and chapters 8-12 are written in Hebrew ; their message is to the Jews. From chapter 2, v. 4, to the end of chapter 7 is matter concerning Gentile empires, and this is written in Aramaic, the language of the eastern empires. In the early chapters, 1, 3, 5, 6, are incidents which display God's sovereignty, whilst chapter 2 and 4 tell of visions given to a heathen monarch. These visions, with those given to Daniel in the later chapters, display not only God's sovereignty, but also God's programme throughout the period called "the times of the Gentiles."

Whilst the Lord Jesus was looking in sorrow at the Temple during His final visit to Jerusalem, someone spoke of the goodly stones adorning the Temple. The Lord then spoke sorrowfully of its destruction (Luke 21 : 5, 6) and foretold "Jerusalem shall be trodden of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (v. 24). Formerly it had pleased Jehovah to set His name in the midst of Israel, and His glorious presence was with them in the Ark and the Tabernacle. Continuing His purpose to be in their midst, as Solomon prayed before the people gathered for the dedication of the Temple, "the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices ; and the glory of the Lord filled the house" (2 Chronicles 7 : 1). But even then, the omniscient eye of a holy God could see the weakness of His people and warned them through Solomon, even as He had warned through Moses centuries before (Deuteronomy 31:29). "But if ye turn away and forsake My statutes . . . and serve other gods, and worship them . . . then . . . this house, which I have hallowed for My name, will I cast out of My sight" (2 Chronicles 7 : 19, 20). As the people did persist in their sin, according to God's sure word, the glory was withdrawn as revealed to Ezekiel, another exiled prophet, a contemporary of Daniel (Ezekiel 11 : 23). The "times of the Gentiles" extends from this period of the exile when the glory of God's presence was withdrawn from the Temple until His glory shall return again as foretold in Ezekiel 43 : 4, 5.

In the first six chapters the prophet acts as the divinely chosen interpreter of dreams concerning the "times of the Gentiles," and with his friends, by various incidents exhibits

God's power to keep and deliver. The last six chapters record visions given to Daniel himself concerning this same period, and particularly, how the nations will deal with Israel in "the time of the end" (chapter 12 : 9, 13), the short period before the overthrow of Gentile domination. This period is also called "the great tribulation" or "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Matthew 24 : 21 ; Jeremiah 30 : 7 ; Daniel 12 : 1).

When Daniel prophesied, he was unaware of God's other plan of divine grace in calling out a people for His name after the chosen people Israel had rejected their Messiah. This "mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" was "in other ages not known" (Ephesians 3 : 9 and 5). Nor was Daniel shown that during the times of the Gentiles, from the time of the final rejection of the Messiah at Calvary, there would be a people separated unto God, the Church, the Bride of Christ, who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be with Him for a short time before returning with Him when He comes in judgment to end "the times of the Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 15 : 51-54 ; 2 Thessalonians 1 : 7-9 ; Revelations 1 : 7).

In His sovereign power God moved to raise up the emperor Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument. "Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar . . . My servant" (Jeremiah 27 : 6). Whilst Egypt and Babylon were striving for mastery, Josiah king of Judah had foolishly opposed Egypt when Pharaoh-Necho was on his way to meet Babylon's king. Josiah was killed at the battle of Megiddo (609 B.C.) and Pharaoh put Jehoiakim as king in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:29-34). Three years later Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, who in the following year defeated Pharaoh-Necho at the battle of Carchemish (605). When Jerusalem was taken in 606 B.C. (2 Kings 24 : 1 ; Jeremiah 25 : 1 ; Daniel 1 : 1-2), the nobility and better types of the people were taken captive to Babylon. From this time, the seventy years of exile foretold by Jeremiah began (Jeremiah 25 : 11). Eight years later Jerusalem was again attacked by Nebuchadnezzar, and the rebellious king Jehoiakim taken in chains to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36 : 6, 7). More hostages were taken leaving only the poorest in the land (Jeremiah 39 : 10 ; 40 : 7). Jeremiah remained, but Ezekiel and Daniel were with the exiles. During this eight year period, Jeremiah had consistently warned that the nation should submit to Babylon, and he suffered for his

faithful witness (Jeremiah 26 : 18, 19 and 20). Nebuchadnezzar then made Zedekiah king in Jerusalem, and Jeremiah, continuing his exhortation to submission, suffered still more (chapters 28 ; 34 : 21 ; 37 : 38). Finally in 587 B.C. Jerusalem was taken and destroyed as foretold (Jeremiah 39 : 1-8 ; 2 Kings 24 : 20-25 ; 2 Chronicles 36 : 13-16, 18-21).

Daniel as a young noble or a prince, well instructed in God's word, became a captive in exile, together with all the noblest and best of his people. In the book, his character and faithfulness is revealed, and his dependence upon God is continually seen (for example, at 1 : 8 ; 2 : 17-18 ; 20 : 23, 28 ; 3 : 17, 18 ; 5 : 17-23 ; 6 : 4, 5, 22 ; 7 : 28 ; 9 : 2-4, 20 ; 10 : 2, 3, 12). He was a man of prayer, he studied God's word, he believed God, he was a "man greatly beloved" of God (chapter 10 : 11, 19) and he was indeed a hero of faith (Hebrews 11 : 33). To this man greatly beloved was given the Old Testament picture of "the time of the end" (chapter 12 : 4, 13) and similarly to John "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was given the "revelation of Jesus Christ" showing "things which shall come to pass hereafter" (Revelations 1 : 18) showing also the bliss of the redeemed when "death shall be no more . . . no curse" (Revelations 21 : 4 ; 22 : 3). The two pictures are related and the visions of Daniel should be compared with those given six centuries later to John, after the eternal sacrifice for sin had been offered.

Each chapter can be related to present day problems, and gives exhortation to God's people of this age. Though the events in chapter 5 and chapter 6 are out of chronological order, for events after the end of Belshazzar's, obviously occurred after the vision in chapter 8, given in the third year of his reign, their position is necessary to conform to the arrangement wherein the first part, chapters 1-6, illustrates God's faithfulness and His purpose in judgment as revealed to a heathen monarch, whilst the second part outlines future events and God's care of His faithful ones until the time of the end as revealed to Daniel by the visions.

Notes on Peter's Epistles

by WM. RODGERS

ALTHOUGH 2nd Peter ends, as it begins, with exhortations to spiritual progress, the epistle as a whole sets before us, as characteristic of the present period, a progress, or rather sequence, that is downgrade. In ch. 1 we at first have saints

who are going on in the ways of God, adding to their faith virtue, and so on. But this is succeeded by a reference to backsliding saints who have ceased to move in the right direction, who see only what is near, and who have forgotten the cleansing from the old sins. There follows in ch. 2 a lengthy description of men who profess to be saints, but are not really so ; who, although they are found "among you" (v. 1) yet have still the unclean character of the "dog" and "sow" (v. 22). Finally, in ch. 3 we come in contact with open scoffers, who "walk after their own lusts," and flatly contradict the Word of God.

It is noticeable that each of these types can easily drift into, or produce the one which comes after it. Saints who have been going on well are ever in danger of slacking off, and so becoming to some extent like those who go down to the pit ; and when this occurs it becomes easy for unsaved professors to creep in amongst them. Then is brought about a state of things which in turn tends to encourage the development of scoffers and infidels, who sneer at God's promises and warnings. We have, therefore, in our epistle what we might speak of as evolution downwards ; which is indeed the only kind of evolution there can be, apart from God's intervention. It is what the Scriptures lead us to expect, as marking the age in which we live ; and yet we ourselves are not free from blame in the matter. If it were not for failure on the part of God's people to go on for Him, professors and "false teachers" would, as in Acts 5. 13, find no place amongst them ; and if there were no unreal professors to cause a blot upon Christian testimony, scepticism would be deprived of its chief excuse and its keenest weapon.

GOD'S WISE PROVISION

To encourage the saints in this going on for God, Peter turns their thoughts in two opposite directions. In ch. 1 he reminds them of the wonderful start God had given them and of the provision He had made for their continuance in His ways. In ch. 3 on the other hand, he would have them look forward to the bright prospect that lies ahead, and to the "new heavens and the new earth" wherein dwelleth righteousness. The former consideration should assure them of God-given ability to continue in their steadfastness and growth ; the latter should secure their willingness to do so.

Let us then first look more closely into his exhortation of

ch. 1, and the basis upon which it rests. This chapter is composed of two almost equal paragraphs; and it is with the earlier one, which ends with verse 11, that we have at present to do. In this we are taken all the way through the Christian course, from its beginning when we obtained "like precious faith" with the apostles and early saints (v. 1) to its close when we shall have ministered unto us our "entrance into the everlasting kingdom" (v. 11); and in it we learn that, so richly has God provided us with all things necessary for the journey when He started us on it, that no excuse is left for us falling out by the way, or for finishing with any other than an "abundant entrance."

The paragraph may be looked on as comprising four sections; (1) Verses 1, 2, which contain the opening salutation; (2) Verses 3, 4 in which God's great provision for us is described; (3) Verses 5-9, which set forth the responsibility entailed on us in consequence of this provision; and (4) Verses 10, 11 in which we have an earnest exhortation, founded on all that has gone before.

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

The interest which the salutation has for us, as connected with the other sections that follow it, and indeed with the rest of the epistle, centres in its introduction of two great matters; (1) our precious faith—the means by which salvation became ours; and (2) our knowledge of God and Christ—the element in which not only grace and peace are multiplied unto us, but all true progress in Christian experience takes place. The importance of these two becomes evident in verses 5-8, where the "adding" to which the saints are there exhorted, has for its starting point "your faith" (v. 5), and for its goal "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 8).

The next section of the paragraph, verses 3, 4 develops and explains the expressions used in the salutation, and in doing so introduces two other important words, "life" and "godliness." These at first sight suggest to us, the beginning and the after development of our career as saints, reminding us that we have been granted all things that pertain, not only to getting eternal life when we believed, but also to godly living ever afterwards. But, indeed the connection between the terms is closer than this way of expressing it might imply; for the "life" which we received at the beginning abides in

us still, and the "godliness" is the manifestation of it. Moreover, the phrase, "through the knowledge of Him that hath called us," in the latter part of verse 3, applies to the "life" as well as to the "godliness," recalling to us our Lord's own words in John 17. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

INWARD AND OUTWARD

It may be pointed out in passing that the word "given" (R.V., "granted") in verses 3 and 4 answers to the "obtained" of verse 1. We have "obtained," or were allotted what God has "granted" to us, from whichever angle we look at it, whether our "faith," or the "things pertaining to life and godliness," or "His precious and exceeding great promises." Note also that the two sides of our deliverance mentioned in end of verse 4, "become partakers of the divine nature," and "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," correspond respectively to the "life" and the "godliness" of verse 3.

These two aspects, the inward as well as the outward, the positive as well as the negative of what the "promises" accomplish for us, should be carefully borne in mind because when we come to ch. 2. 20 we read of certain of whom the outward thing was in some degree true but not the inward. They had "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ," and yet they were "again entangled therein and overcome;" the reason being, as the context shows, that they had not "become partakers of the divine nature," but still as has already been pointed out, had the unclean character of the "dog" and the "sow" (v. 22). In consequence of this, they were found willing to listen to "promises" of a very different kind (v.19); and the final outcome was, in words quoted by Peter from our Lord's own saying of Matt. 12. 45, "their last state became worse than the first" (v. 20, R.V.).

STUDIES IN THE TABERNACLE

by RAY DAWES

The Altar of Incense (Exodus 30 : 1-10)

THE Altar of Incense or Golden Altar was also made of shittim wood overlaid with gold and having a golden crown upon it characterising the Risen Christ in Heaven.

It was placed immediately in front of the heavy veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. On the altar the High Priest burnt sweet incense each morning and evening. Hence there was a perpetual fragrance pervading the holy place.

It was a vessel of approach to God. The brazen altar in the court, together with the sacrifice consumed therein assured the sinner of his perfect acceptance, but the golden altar in the holy place assures the saint of his perpetual access. The former speaks of Christ's work on earth as the Saviour, the latter of His work in heaven as High Priest. The one sets forth salvation, the other communion and worship. The one affords salvation to the many, but only the few avail themselves of the other. Many pass into the court and experience conversion but few proceed into the holy place to enjoy communion. May we be amongst the few.

The incense undoubtedly speaks of the fragrance of Christ continually ascending to God and filling His holy presence. This incense was compounded of four ingredients (v. 34) no other incense could be used. The fire which consumed its odours was taken from the brazen altar. This teaches us that the devouring flames of God's holiness which kindled on Christ the Sacrifice at Calvary, to bring forth forgiveness, also had the effect of bringing out all the perfections of Christ which never cease to rise as sweet incense to God.

It was the duty of Aaron the high priest to offer the incense continually. Another truth now emerges. Christ, whom Aaron prefigures, acts in this way in God's presence. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and is able to save us to the uttermost. Aaron is also a figure of believers, as all believers are priests.

It is our privilege as priests to offer worship. The sweet incense surely is a type of this. True worship is the presentation of Christ to God. As the believer apprehends and appreciates Him, there is that response of and movement of the whole being towards God in adoring worship. And this worship God expects from His people daily. As Aaron offered the incense at the golden altar, so we are to offer our praises and petitions in the fragrance of His Name. This is a daily and individual exercise, but it takes on deeper meaning in the collective worship of the assembly when we meet to remember Him. Do we contribute to the incense?

There being four ingredients to this sweet incense, the four gospels are suggested. It is certainly true that as we meditate upon the Lord in the Gospel records, compare and contrast, there is this holy compound of incense prepared. It is solemn to observe that no other incense was acceptable. This condemns the varied forms of worship in Christendom and warns us too that Christ alone should occupy us in our communion with God.

As the priest moved out of the holy place the savour of the sanctuary having filled the folds of his garments, clung to his person. Likewise believers who enjoy God's presence and fulfil their priestly obligations have about them the sweet atmosphere of heaven. May it be true of us all.

RECOVERY AND ORDER

by **BRYAN SMITH**

No. 3

HAVING firmly resisted his adversaries, Nehemiah now faces a fresh attack, this time in the form of a false charge against himself. "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand ; wherein was written : It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that you and the Jews think to rebel ; for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And you have also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem saying, there is a king in Judah : and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together " Nehemiah 6 v. 5-7. Nehemiah's answer is short but decisive, " there are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart " Nehemiah 6 v. 8.

In a similar way did Paul receive " an open letter " " Mine answer to them that do examine me is this " 1 Corinthians 9 v. 3. Did he endeavour to maintain a place of power over the people of God and assume an authority in Divine things which he had no right to assume? Was he out for gain? The truth was they imagined the whole thing. He establishes the truth of his apostleship and right to " eat and to drink " as a guest of the church 1 Corinthians 9 v. 1-6. Thereupon, he asserts the right of all servants to this. Both nature and scripture, yes, and the express commandment of the Lord, affirm the right of the spiritual workman to be maintained and

his house without resorting to working with one's hands v. 7-15. Paul then explains why he did not use this right v. 16-18. But what does Paul mean when he says "for if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me?" v. 17. "Willingly," that is, "a self chosen vocation." "Against my will," that is, "not my own choice but God's appointment" (Heading). But would "I have a reward" apply to the first? "If I preach the gospel willingly—which is not the case—I have a reward. But if I do so by constraint—as is really the case—it is a dispensation committed" (Heinrici). Some readily responded to the Lord's call, e.g. the twelve. They have a right to recompense. Paul was constrained of the Lord into apostleship. "What is my reward then?" v. 18. The gratuitous aspect of the gospel. "I introduce into my apostleship that element of freedom which was wanting at its origin, and I thus establish, as far as in me lies, a sort of equality between me and the apostles who attached themselves freely to Christ." (Godet). Out for gain Paul? Yes! The Jews v. 20. The Gentiles v. 21. The weak believer v. 22. And let the strong take warning v. 23-27. But how do we understand the words "lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway?" v. 27. The missing of salvation? (Grant, Stuart, Kelly). The missing of reward? (Vine, Bruce, Bunting). Perhaps the section of Nehemiah will help us decide for he encountered hirelings "and lo I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me." Nehemiah 6 v. 12, 13. Discerning their evil intent, Nehemiah turns in heart confidence to God that he might be preserved in faithfulness and leadership in the building of the wall.

The apostle Paul continues his warning from Israel's wilderness history. Moral and spiritual disaster could befall them 1 Corinthians 10 v. 1-12. Let us not, therefore, brother or sister, put ourselves in a place of temptation as some of the Corinthians were doing by attending the idol banquet. It is a different matter if God tests us, we can count upon His faithfulness and support in the temptation v. 13, 14.

Nehemiah saw the wall completed, "so the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two

days" Nehemiah 6 v. 15. Again, "now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem; for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." Nehemiah 7 v. 1, 2. Having enclosed the city, Nehemiah ensured that watchfulness marked all so that there was no unwanted intrusion v. 3, 4. All had to prove their title to a place in Israel v. 5-73.

Paul seeks to complete the wall at Corinth. How? "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Corinthians 10 v. 16. He departs from the normal order to speak of the cup first. Why? The cup speaks of a real communion formed, firstly, with the Lord. So also, the loaf. Only it additionally speaks of a real communion formed with the other worshippers. The order best serves this transition "for we being many are one loaf, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one loaf." v. 17. In Israel the altar furnished the table v. 18. Similarly in the Gentile temple banquet v. 20. The sacrifice of Christ in all its Divine acceptability is the basis of the believer's communion with God at the Lord's table, of which communion the cup and the loaf speak. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of demons" v. 21. But how explain "cannot?" A moral impossibility. (Vine, Darby). But Paul cites in v. 22 the possibility that some had already attempted it. See also 1 Corinthians 8 v. 10. The enjoyment of the provision of the Lord, at whose table we sit every day of the week. You could not enjoy this provision and enjoy the devil's fare. (Clarke, Heading). But the "cup of the Lord" is the same as in 1 Corinthians 11 v. 27. And is the "cup of demons" literal? It will render fellowship with Christ impossible (Lies, Kelly). Yes, but we go further. It is self contradiction, incurring God's displeasure and drawing down Divine judgment v. 22. From the idol banquet the apostle answers two further questions. What of dinner in my own house? v. 25, 26. What of dinner in an unbelievers house? v. 27-30. He concludes with what we always do well to remember "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Do not stumble the unsaved (Jew or Gentile) nor yet "the church of God" v. 31-33.

ABRAHAM — FRIEND OF GOD

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES

INTERCESSION

Chapter 18

WE now come to a further appearance of Jehovah to Abraham and to a very important episode in his life showing the intimacy in which he stood with his Lord, and here we have returned to the question of Lot again, for he had gone back into Sodom and had become a great man in the wicked and doomed city. Jehovah is however coming to Abraham incognito, with two others, and they appear as "three men" but as the story proceeds it is apparent that two are angels and one is Jehovah and Abraham thus perceives Him, but note, he preserves that incognito while the other two are there. This shows great reserve and reverence, and while he speaks to them in the plural yet he addresses one, "my Lord" that is "Adonahay" which is "Master" or "Sovereign Lord." Now this Title is in the plural but as Newberry points out that "in this form it is used only as a Divine Title." This chapter, as it unfolds, is exact in its expressions, as we should expect and should be carefully noted as regards the Titles used and the "number" whether singular or plural. How wonderful and fine is the relationship between the Lord and Abraham and how far he has come in spite of his retrogressive steps, in the knowledge of the Lord.

He is going to "entertain angels unawares" or is it altogether "unawares?" Certainly one was far more than an angel. This is one of the Theophanies of scripture in the Old Testament, or we may say "Christophanies" anticipating as these do, the Incarnation of the One "being in the form of God" but one day to "become man."

He runs, he bows, and he constrains, suggesting or promising "a little water for their feet" and "a morsel of bread." Newberry puts capitals in verse 3. "My Lord," "Thy Sight," "Thy servant," and then "you" and "your" in verses 4 and 5.

He promises little but provides much. He hastens, and runs, and what a feast he provides. Abraham, Sarah, and the servant are all hastening to entertain the strangers. Cakes, a calf, butter and milk, all quickly prepared and HE himself stands by while they ate, just as a servant would. This is all fine and

wonderful, and we sometimes think of these early patriarchs as though they were little more than uncivilised men but they could certainly teach us a lesson in conduct, insight and gracious service. He was not invited to eat with them. This is reserved for New Testament saints. Verses 9 and 10 must be noted ; “ they said ” and “ He said ” for one was the Lord, Who was the promiser of life and the quickener thereof.

Sarah laughs at the “ impossibility ” of the promise and is rebuked therefore, though she denies, in fear, but now the Divine question, appearing again and again in scripture “ Is anything too hard for Jehovah ? ” and then “ I will return ” showing that this was Jehovah. And now the repast is finished and the men rise up and look stedfastly toward Sodom, and here the two angels passed on, but Abraham stood yet “ before the Lord ” v. 22.

Abraham has now become “ My friend ” and “ the friend of God ” (see Isaiah 41 : 8 and 2 Chronicles 20 : 7 and James 2 : 23) and note specially that in 2 Chronicles Jehoshaphat in distress is threatened by the two nations of which Lot became the progenitor, Moab and Ammon. The whole chapter is most touching, heartening and instructive. See also Amos 3, 7 and the words of the Lord “ Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do ? ” and the reason therefore. He is taking Abraham His friend into His confidence and doubtless because Lot is in danger. This is the first prayer in the Bible and we may learn many things from it.

But before proceeding we must look at these preceding verses. “ Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do ? ” What a wonderful question. Here is one man in the earth with whom God desires the fullest fellowship. Not with angels but with a man, and chiefly because the promises and covenant belong to him ; but to be fulfilled his children must keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment (v. 19). We know that they did not do this and the promise and covenant is now in abeyance until they are brought to this state. We must not read into verses 20 and 21 any idea that the knowledge of God is limited concerning things taking place on earth. This is the knowledge of experience and investigation similar to the first question of the Bible, to Adam, “ Where art thou ? ” though He knew full well where he was. It is similar in the New Testament such as concerning Lazarus “ Where have ye laid him ? ” Those who question this, desire to suggest that the

Lord's knowledge was limited though they forget that He had said, "Lazarus is dead . . ." showing that He **did** know all that was taking place. He is the same Person Who here "goes down to see . . ." It appears from many scriptures that angelic hosts report the doings on earth to the Supreme Being.

Abraham now takes up the position and advantage of the intercessor. The Lord has not SAID that He would destroy Sodom, but that is implied. The saintly soul is able to penetrate these things and know, and thus to intercede, and this because of Lot the backslider. Did Abraham think that this poor man had gained converts during his stay in Sodom? It appears likely, and so he starts with pleading for "Fifty" and he knows the Lord so well that he rests his lever upon this divine fulcrum "That be far from Thee to do after this manner . . . that be far from Thee, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Now this is what honours the Lord and He encourages Abraham to pursue his prayer and how reverently he does it, "I . . . which am dust and ashes" and "Oh, let not the Lord be angry . . ." once and twice. He comes down to ten and the Lord follows him in this, as long as Abraham asks, God will answer. What encouragement this should give us to enter into such fellowship and intimacy which these Old Testament saints enjoyed in such full measure.

This left Abraham at peace, everything was in the Lord's hands, he had made his plans and left all there, for he returns to his place and in the next chapter at the destruction of the cities we read he got up early in the morning to view this terrible holocaust. The flesh would no doubt have rushed around and done something, going forth to warn Lot at least, but no, Abraham could leave everything to the Judge of all the earth Who must do right.

THE sure way to become a moral shipwreck, to stand disgraced as a witness for Christ, is to neglect secret prayer and intercourse with God ; also to give up the private reading and study of the Scriptures. "Praying always" and "watching thereunto with all perseverance" is an apostolic counsel to saints sitting in Heavenly places (Eph. 6 : 18). The knowledge of heavenly truths, or even an accurate acquaintance with the internal contents of the whole of the Sacred Volume, will not yield dependence upon God which is expressed in prayer. If you want to be preserved, never neglect private prayer. The

Christian who, for a day even, omits this privilege and duty, trades upon his own strength, works upon his own resources, and, unless God in mercy upholds, he will most assuredly stumble. A Christian who has been with God in **much** prayer, is calm and not easily put out in the presence of evil and difficulty.—Selected.

SPIRITUAL

BALANCE

THE PERILS OF UNSCRIPTURAL EXTREMES

by WILLIAM BUNTING

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Call Them Back

Call Thy people back, O Lord,
As in the early days,
When love was warm, and fresh, and bright,
When first we knew Thy grace ;
When first Thy light broke through our night
And set our hearts ablaze.
Lord, call us back !

Call Thy people back, O Lord,
To that simplicity
Which marked Thy servants long ago ;
Full satisfied with Thee, although
The world against us be.
Lord, call us back !

From the many paths unmeet
Our wayward feet have trod,
From foolish words, and wilful ways,
Yes, turn us back, O God,
Afresh to taste Thy love and grace,
Else Thou must use Thy rod.
Lord, call us back !

Call Thy loved ones back, O Lord,
From toilsome paths and steep ;
From bearing burdens, all Thine own,
Which only make us weep,
The while we moan, and toil alone,
And only sorrow reap.
Lord, call us back !

Selected.

THE THINGS WHICH ARE

by Dr. JOHN BOYD

The Letter to the Church in Ephesus

(Rev. 2 : 1-7)

BEFORE looking at this first letter in detail it might be well to examine the general pattern of the whole seven. There is a heading to each letter indicating its distinctive destination. The same formula is used in addressing all seven churches—'To the angel of the church in . . . write' (R.V.). After this comes the letter itself. Each has a similar seven-fold structure.

(1) **The Lord's Introduction.** The Lord uses a different attribute to introduce Himself to the various churches—an attribute closely related to the particular message of the letter, and taken largely from the various designations given to John in the vision in Chap. 1. All the introductions have this in common, that they present the Lord Jesus Christ as the competent Judge.

(2) **The Lord's Knowledge,** expressed in each case by the words, 'I know,' either their works or their condition (2 : 9, 13). They point to the omniscience associated with the deity of Christ.

(3) **The Lord's Commentary** on the state of the churches, consisting of a commendation or a condemnation of their activities, or both.

(4) **The Lord's Exhortation** to conduct well-pleasing to Him.

(5) **The Lord's Action** following His findings—judgment for culpable failure, and reward for faithful service.

(6) **The Lord's Command** to each saint, to pay earnest heed to His messages. The formula here is identical in all the epistles, and intimates the close association of the Holy Spirit with the Lord in these communications.

(7) **The Lord's Promise** to the individual overcomer, the true believer in any church, no matter how much its failure. To these are different rewards promised. The relative position of these last two portions of the letters is different in the last four epistles from that in the first three.

The Church in Ephesus is the first addressed. It is the best known church in the New Testament. Three chapters in the Acts of the Apostles are devoted to it. Paul paid it two visits,

one lasting two years, during which he instructed them fully in the things of God. Two epistles were directly addressed to the church in Ephesus (Ephesians and Rev. 2 : 1-7), whilst a third has it as the main objective (1 Tim. 3 : 15, R.V.). Timothy, too, had been sent thither to instruct them more fully in divine things (1 Tim. 1 : 3). Profane history tells us that John himself also laboured there a long time.

The title by which the Lord introduces Himself to Ephesus is taken from Ch. 1 : 13, 16, with a slight variation. In 1 : 16 the Lord is described as **He that had** in His right hand seven stars, here as **He that holdeth** them. The latter verb implies mighty power put forth for the support and defence of the angels in the discharge of their duties—the passing on of unpleasant messages. Compare also the title in the letter to Sardis (3 : 1). The Lord is also here seen not merely **in the midst** (1 : 13) of the churches, but as **He that walketh in the midst** of them, implying His constant and impartial inspection.

The Lord's title here suggests His right, and His alone, to control the angels of the churches. His is the sole prerogative to inspect them for judgment. Had Ephesus, as possibly the parent, the first and most important of these Asian churches (Acts 19 : 10), been usurping this function of the Lord, by taking to itself the right to interfere in the affairs of the other churches? If so, the Lord gently, but firmly, reproves them in this title. Let each assembly today remember this lesson, and not judge another church.

The Lord then displays His knowledge concerning the church. 'Thy' (v. 2) refers to the church, not to the angel. The letter had been sent to the angel, but the message was intended for the church. To the church the letter is directed, although it would seem that the state of the church was in some way the responsibility of the angel.

He told the angel that He had observed (v. 2a) two things about the church, each prefixed by the adjective 'thy,' (1) 'thy works'—the active side of their christian life, further detailed in v. 2b, (2) 'thy toil (R.V., lit., labour unto weariness) and patience'—the passive side of their christian life, described further in v. 3.

Next follows the Lord's commentary. He first commends them. Their works consisted in (a) not bearing with evil men—the church stood for righteousness, (b) trying those who

falsely called themselves apostles—demonstrating unflinching discipline, (c) deciding that these false apostles were without a mandate from God, like the false prophets of 1 John 4 : 1.

Their toil and patience were seen in that (a) they had dealt patiently in these matters, (b) they had borne the reproach of such falsehood in the church for the sake of the name of Christ, (c) they did not grow tired of this work although the Lord knew their weariness. The word translated 'labour' (v. 2) comes from the same root as 'fainted' (v. 3). They had toiled hard enough to produce weariness, but they had not grown weary of the work of rooting out the evil.

But the Lord also had a message of condemnation for the Ephesian church. They had left their first love. He had just commended them for what their zeal had done—possibly done out of love, but not their first love. Following conversion the believer's first love is for the person of Christ. That this should grow in Ephesus had been the burden of Paul's prayer for them (Eph. 3 : 14-19). Yet now love for Christ had been displaced by love of correct ecclesiastical position, love of doctrine, love of righteousness, love of judgment. These were all right in their proper place, but much better if inspired by love for Christ. This the Lord saw to be lacking. Outwardly the church seemed healthy, but the Lord saw the heart—their first love gone.

Is there not in this a lesson for today, for those who minister to the saints? Would not ministry of the person and work of Christ, intended to increase the believer's love and devotion to Him, yield better results than so-called corrective ministry? If we are brought back to our first love it would cause us to walk aright. Love for Him who loved us even unto death is superior in producing godliness than receiving advice from well-meaning brethren. The Christ who in love drew us to seek Him at conversion will daily produce in us love to keep us ever near to Himself. The contrast between the first love of the Ephesian church and the love of orthodox procedure that the Lord found in it is well illustrated in the love of the Shulamite for the person of the Shepherd (Cant. 5 : 10-16) as contrasted with the love of one of the daughters of Jerusalem who rather appreciated Solomon by reason of his ancillary glories (Cant. 3 : 6-10).

Note the Lord's exhortation. It is three-fold—a remembrance, a repentance, a reformation. (1) **Remember**—whence

thou art fallen. The Lord directs the church in Ephesus to a consideration of the days of their first love as an incentive to its repetition. The remembrance of former days of enlightenment and joy, despite times of tribulation, would bring them back to their first love as a guiding principle. (2) **Repent**, lit., change your mind concerning the object of your affection. Let it be fixed on Christ rather than on judgments which pander to your own vanity, and exalt yourselves. (3) **Reform**. Do the first works. This will be the evidence of true repentance—the first love producing again the first works, what characterised you in the days subsequent to your conversion to God.

The Lord tells of the action He proposes to take if the church did not follow His exhortation. Failure to do so would result in the lampstand being removed. Its value as a trustworthy witness for Christ would disappear. This has happened. No longer does the church in Ephesus exist.

In v. 6, before concluding the epistle, the Lord again commends the Ephesian church—this time for their stand against Nicolaitism, possibly explaining the false apostles (v. 2b). The Nicolaitans were lit., the overcomers of the people, those in the church lording it over the ordinary saints—the beginnings of clerisy in the Church. They asserted themselves to be what they were not (v. 2b) ; they loved to have pre-eminence (3 John 9). This was an evil refuted by the Ephesian church, and equally detested by the Lord. He alone is Lord (v. 1b).

Now follows the Lord's command to the individual believer—his obligation to pay heed the message. An exactly similar demand is sent to each church. Three lessons are taught in these commands, (a) 'He that hath an ear' indicates the believer to whom God has given the ability to receive such messages (Matt. 13 : 9-17). (b) The Lord would indicate the close association of the Holy Spirit with Himself in the transmission of these messages to the churches. (c) He would emphasise that the letters were for the instruction of all churches alike. It is as when He addressed four disciples privately He applied the message to all the disciples, 'What I say unto you I say unto all' (Mark 13 : 37).

The letter closes with a personal promise to the individual overcomer. The overcomer in v. 7 is not merely one who succeeds in avoiding the failures of vv. 4-5. This expression indicates a genuine believer. John defined the term in 1 John

5 : 5 as any one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and is in possession of eternal life. Compare also Rev. 2 : 11 and 20 : 14. Each of these seven letters includes a special message to the overcomer. Thus each **professed** believer should realise that if his life merits the censure the Lord gives in the letter he would do well to question whether or not he is truly born again.

To the overcomer in Ephesus a promise is given that he would 'eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' This turns our thoughts to Gen. 2 : 8-9, the first occurrence of the two expressions, 'tree of life' and 'paradise.' The tree of life is further explained by God as that which guarantees to man everlasting life (Gen. 3 : 22). To eat of this tree has been forbidden to man since the Fall, but now again the promise of eating of it is renewed to the true believer, that is, enjoying immortality. This is not to be experienced in an earthly garden of delight, but in the paradise where God Himself forever dwells. What a blessed hope for him who by a consistent christian life down here manifests that in him abides the eternal Spirit of God !

Let us take to ourselves then the message of this letter. The Lord still walks in the midst of the churches today. Does He find in your assembly things to correspond with what He discovered in the Ephesian church ? If so let us amend our ways, pay attention to His exhortations, and individually examine ourselves whether indeed we be in the faith (2 Cor. 13 : 5).

(To be continued)

DANIEL THE PROPHET

by **A. J. ATKINS**

His Teaching for These Last Days

Introduction (2)

BE SEPARATE—BE YE HOLY

AMONGST a conquered people (vv. 1-2) God caused captured princes (vv. 3-6) to manifest their consecrated purpose (vv. 8-21). The four, with names signifying hope and trust in God, stand out conspicuously amongst the others "youths in whom was no blemish . . . skilful in all wisdom . . . understanding science . . . such as had ability to stand in the king's palace" (v. 4). To assist their assimilation of the ways of the Chaldean court, the master is instructed to rename the youths with names suitable for a heathen court. Thus :

DANIEL—God is My judge, becomes BELTESHAZZAR
—Bel's prince ;
HANANIAH—Beloved of the Lord, becomes SHAD-
RACH—Illumined by the sun-god RAK ;
MISHAEL—Who is as God, becomes MESHACH—Who
is like Venus ;
AZARIAH—The Lord is my help, becomes ABED-NEGO
—Servant of Nego.

The name change was more than political ; it was an attempt to erase memories of Jehovah and Jerusalem from their minds in order to align them to the ways of the false gods of Babylon and induce conformity to their practices. Similarly, our enemy the devil seeks to blot out from our memories the things of God and lead us to conform to the desires of the flesh and to the world.

When the time of testing came to the captive princes, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat" (chapter 1:8). Acquainted with the holy law, Daniel knew that it was dishonouring to the holy God to eat things offered to idols. The law repeatedly exhorted "Be ye holy for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2). It was not just a matter of eating, but a matter of principle. Expediency would suggest that as captives they should conform to the will and command of their captors, but Daniel discerned the defilement and stood firm. Our God is ever ready as the "very present help in trouble," and as the four young men stood firm, God was watching and providing. "God made Daniel to find favour and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs" (v. 9) so that despite the fears of the steward, the four men and the God they honoured were put to the test. At the end of the ten days proving, not only were their countenances fairer, but their bodies were strengthened and their souls enriched by the fellowship of leaning upon a faithful God.

Daniel and his faithful companions stand as a type of the faithful remnant who, despite all the fierceness and terror of "the time of Jacob's trouble," will be steadfast in their witness (Daniel 2 : 1). Similarly they speak to us for we live in a world antagonistic to God and His word. The world, the flesh, and the devil are constantly pressing. How shall we stand ? Let us purpose in our hearts even as Daniel did, "Go ye out

from thence, touch no unclean thing . . . be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord ” (Isaiah 52 : 11). So should we stand today concerning the things of God, conforming to His pattern. If we would be holy, as He is holy (1 Peter 1 : 15) we must of necessity come out, be separate, touch no unclean thing as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6 : 14 ; 7 : 1) presenting our whole bodies to God, holy, and not fashioned according to this world, but transformed (Romans 12 : 2). “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach ” (Hebrews 13 : 12, 13).

God honoured the faith of His servants who confessed His name, moving the heart of the supervisor to show favour. The four were confident that the God who desired their sanctification—as He still desires ours (1 Thessalonians 4 : 3)—would so feed them that they could safely challenge, “then as thou seest, deal with thy servants ” (v. 13). Our spiritual food is Christ Himself and His word, we should not hanker after the delights of the world if we would be sanctified to God.

Having proved faithful in this initial testing, Daniel’s purpose of heart led to satisfying nourishment (v. 15) and God gave wisdom (v. 17) and added responsibility in God’s work (vv. 19, 20). No doubt Daniel often remembered his forefather Joseph who was taken from bondage to preserve life, to save by a great deliverance (Genesis 45 : 5, 7, 8). So should we also remember the Lord’s purposes in our redemption, and in these present days of lukewarmness, if we would sup with the King, we must learn His teaching, willing to do His will only (John 7 : 17). These are the days of easy conformity, and therefore we need to “cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart ” (Acts 11 : 23) to “keep the commandment without spot ” (1 Timothy 6 : 14) and “hold the pattern of sound words ” (2 Timothy 1 : 13). In these last times when “mockers walking after their own ungodly lusts ” abound (Jude 17), so many have thrust conscience from them, and have “made shipwreck concerning the faith ” (1 Timothy 1 : 19). Their downfall should remind us to take heed to Daniel’s example —“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself . . . God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom . . . and Daniel continued ” (Daniel 1 : 8, 17, 21).

(To be continued)

STUDIES IN THE TABERNACLE

The Veil (Exod. 26 : 31-35)

by RAY DAWES

THE VEIL partitioned the tabernacle, hanging between the holy place and the holy of holies. Indeed this was its express purpose to divide the two compartments, v. 33. The word itself implies separation. It shut off the immediate presence-chamber of God from human eyes and human approach. The priests could minister within the holy place, but could not move beyond the veil into the holy of holies.

The significance of this division is interpreted for us plainly by the Spirit in Hebrews 9 : 8 "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." It taught the people that this was a temporary expedient pointing on to something better. God desired to dwell among them, and go with them on their journeyings, but they were a sinful people and He was a holy God. Sacrifices were instituted to take account of sin in various aspects, but they were repetitive, the final solution of the sin problem was not yet revealed. There could be no permanent, free access into God's presence meantime, the veil barred the way. The people were necessarily kept at a distance, constantly reminded of their sin and God's holiness.

The veil itself is also interpreted for us in Hebrews 10 : 20 "the veil that is to say His flesh," It presents Christ's manhood. His manhood on earth condemns all other men. His life like the veil would forever separate God from the sinner, but that life was yielded up, He was put to death in the flesh. Accordingly, consequent upon His death, the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom (signifying a divine act) Matthew 27 : 51. The way to God was revealed at last. The death marks upon the risen Christ in glorified humanity announce the rent veil, bidding the believer draw near, no longer barring the way, God's presence is open to us, do we value it? Furthermore the veil not only separated man from God, but hid the glory of God. Did not Christ in the flesh hide within Him so to speak the Glory of God. "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see" is certainly a scriptural sentiment. That flesh offered and rent on the Cross however manifests the divine glory to full view. The love, grace, mercy, holiness of God are all told out there.

The veil was of blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen of cunning work with Cherubim. The colours once more

suggest the glories of our Saviour. Blue, the heavenly colour tells of him as the Lord out of heaven ; purple tells of His Kingly character and dignity, scarlet (produced from the blood of worms) tells of His shame and sufferings, fine twined linen, His perfectly balanced righteousness. Cherubims are divine sentinels securing God's claims cf. Gen. 3 : 24 where they are seen keeping the way. On the veil these figures were a continuous reminder that the way to God's holy presence was as yet barred. However, once rent, the veil then exposed to view the cherubim with faces towards the sprinkled blood upon the mercy seat not now barring the sinner but bidding him near. They formed an integral part of the mercy seat, as they did of the veil, indicating their perfect acquiescence in all God's ways.

RECOVERY AND ORDER

by **BRYAN SMITH**

(No. 4)

“ **A**ND Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, this day is holy unto the Lord your God ; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared : for this day is holy unto our Lord ; neither be ye sorry ; for the joy of the Lord is your strength ” (Neh. 8, vv. 9, 10).

How different it was at Corinth. Private dinner tables. The rich feasting to the full. The poor enjoying a very meagre fare. Yes, you celebrate a supper but not the Lord's. This is not what He intended (1 Cor. 11, vv. 20-22). The spiritual meaning of the supper is repeated to the Corinthians by the apostle (vv. 23-26). The loaf is a symbol of the Lord's body, given in sacrifice. The cup represents the new covenant entered into through His blood. “ This do in remembrance of Me.” What is to be done ? In relation to the cup, the drinking of it “ this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.” In relation to the loaf, the breaking and eating of it “ for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come ” (v. 26). But we ask, show to whom ? Some suggest to the unbelievers (Vine, Clarke) “ a specific proclamation to the world ” (McShane). But none are norm-

ally present. The word recalls the answer of the Jewish father to his eldest son's enquiry "what mean ye by this feast?" "And thou shalt show thy son in that day; saying, this is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Exodus 13, v. 8).

Nehemiah notes, also, the observance of the feast of tabernacles. "And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness" (Neh. 8, v. 17). They remembered the ways of God with them.

"In remembrance of Me." What a privilege is ours, fellow believer, to participate in the solemn yet gladsome gathering to call to mind the preciousness of our Lord, to remember Himself in His life and death. But some of the Corinthians had abused this honour with severe consequences (1 Cor. 11, vv. 27-32). What does it mean to eat and drink "unworthily?" Without self judgment (Findlay, Bruce, McShane). Yes, that would correct it without actually describing it. Satisfying one's own lusts. (Heading). Yes, in relation to the congregational meal but not in relation to the loaf and the cup. As common bread (Darby, Grant). Yes, their not discerning the Lord's body was a reason for it, but does it describe it? In an unworthy manner (Clarke, Kelly). In a drunken state (v. 21). The apostle concludes by not debarring the love feast (v. 33) while less important matters could wait his arrival (v. 34).

Nehemiah 8 opens "and all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel" (v. 1). Before detailing some of the happenings of this memorable seventh month, Nehemiah notes that it was both men and women who composed the congregation of Israel to whom the book of the law was brought and read in their hearing. And Ezra "read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law" (v. 3).

Similarly, at Corinth, the apostle reminds them of the dis-

inction between the man and the woman in the assembly—as in creation—and how this distinction is to be publicly acknowledged (1 Cor. 11, vv. 2-16). The man is to appear before God with short hair and open brow. The woman with long hair and covered head. But how do we understand Paul's words "every woman that prayeth or prophesieth?" Private meetings (Vine, Grant, Hoste) (vv. 1-16) "do not apply to the assembly" (Darby). But verses 10 and 16 imply church gatherings. Public, but women only. (Clarke, Heading). "But this type of meeting is not contemplated elsewhere" (McShane). Besides Paul refers to the appearance of men. "The church is viewed as a praying and prophesying company" (Miller). But Paul is particular "every man," "every woman." Silent prayer (Dennett). Is the prophesying silent? Liberty in the assembly to pray or prophesy (Findlay, Bruce). But audible part is forbidden in chapter 14, v. 34. Exceptional occurrences, prayer—a tongue (Godet). But would not Paul have said "in a tongue?" One thing at a time. A question of dress not of speech (Calvin, Kelly, McShane). But why lay down a condition for doing what he will shortly forbid? The veil implies silence (Weiss). To take part publicly was a priori excluded. The veil may be removed at home not in the assembly.

Notes on Peter's Epistles

by **WM. RODGERS**

WE NOW pass on to the third of the four sections, which together form the opening paragraph of 2nd Peter 1. As the second of these (vv. 3, 4) brought before us God's great provision for our heavenward journey, so the third (vv. 5-9) sets forth the responsibility resting on ourselves to make full use of that provision.

The connection between the two sections is made clear in the R.V. rendering of the words which begin the third one at verse 5, "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply . . ." Here the expression, "on your part," suggests that Peter has already been dealing with God's side of the matter; and another phrase, "for this very cause," implies that the exhortation about to be given as to our side of it is based on what he has previously been saying as to His. Moreover, the fact that the exhortation starts with "In your faith supply . . .", reminds

us that this precious faith, which forms the starting-point of our growth, is what we have already "obtained" in verse 1; and the further fact that the fruition of our growth is described as "unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 8) turns our thoughts back to verses 2, 3, where this knowledge is spoken of as the element in which thrive all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

Knowledge Increased

With regard to this last named link of connection, it is interesting to notice that while verses 2, 3 teach that the knowledge of the Lord produces godly living; verses 5-8 on the other hand teach that progress in godly living brings about further knowledge of the Lord. In other words the inner and outer aspects of the Christian's life mutually produce each other. The better I know my Lord the better I shall live for Him, and the better I live for Him the more fully I shall get to know Him.

As may be seen, there are seven graces named in verses 5-7 which should follow upon faith, and as might be expected, the last and highest of the seven is "love." Each of these should be developed out of, and should form the complement of the preceding one; for this, and not merely the "adding" of each as a separate item, is what is implied in the expression used. The rendering in the R.V. gives the idea fairly well, "In your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue knowledge," etc.

The contrast between the positive side of the matter as given in verse 8 and the negative side as given in verse 9 is striking. In the former, not only are the various graces which have been named present, but they "abound" or "increase." In the latter, where they are lacking, not only is there no increase in knowledge of the Lord, but there is forgetfulness even of the things which once were known and experienced.

Established Christians

Another connection which is of interest is formed by the occurrence in verse 9, and again in verse 12, of a word which may be literally rendered "to be present." In the beginning of verse 9 it would be, "he with whom these things are not present"! and in verse 12, "the truth which is present with you." Its repetition might suggest that when Peter speaks of them being "established in the present truth," his thoughts are going back to the practical teaching he has already been

giving them in the earlier verses of the chapter. It may be also remarked that in using the word "established" in verse 12, his mind is probably travelling still further back; since the term thus rendered is the same which his Lord had used to him, when in Luke 22:23, after warning Peter of his impending denial He added, "When thou art converted, strengthen (R.V., "stablish") thy brethren." That is the very thing which our apostle is here seeking to do.

Another word in verse 9 deserving of mention is that which in the A.V. is translated by the phrase, "cannot-see-afar-off," and in the R.V. by "seeing-only-what-is-near." It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, and the simplest English equivalent would perhaps be "short-sighted." The persons here described are at the opposite pole from Abraham and the others referred to in Hebrews 11:13, who saw the promises afar off and embraced them. These are too short-sighted to see the value of the "exceeding great and precious promises" of ch. 1:4 and ch. 3:13, and they show that they have forgotten the cleansing from their old sins by turning back to them.

Making Sure

In the fourth and last section of the paragraph (vs. 10, 11) the apostle presses home his exhortation of the previous section, by pointing to three great results that will accrue from doing "these things" to which he has been urging them. In the first place they will be making their calling and election sure, or in other words, proving to themselves and others that they have truly been born again, and are therefore amongst the number of the "elect" and "called" ones to whom Peter's letters are written (See 1 Peter 1:2, 1:15, 2:9, R.V. 2 Peter 1:3, etc.).

Secondly, they will be preserved from falling by the way, and even from stumbling (as in R.V.), which is what the word here used literally means. In the spiritual realm it is not the one who keeps going on and making progress who stumbles, but the one who has ceased to do so. Nor is it the one whose eyes are lifted up to the things that are "afar off," but the one who sees only what is near.

Finally, those who obey the exhortation of the preceding verses will have "ministered" unto them abundantly an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The word "ministered" here is the

same as is translated "add" in the A.V. of verse 5; and this the R.V. shows by rendering "supply" in the one case, and "supplied" in the other. Its repetition seems to bind the entire passage together, by the thought that when the "faith" obtained by us in verse 1 is made the means of supplying one after the other the various graces mentioned in verses 5-7, the Lord Himself will supply an abundant entrance at the end of the course. As is stated in Phil. 1 : 6 (R.V.), "He which began a good work in you will perfect it."

(To be continued)

ABRAHAM—FRIEND OF GOD

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES

Chapter 19

SODOM

THIS sad scene we must pass over very briefly as it forms no part of the story of Abraham except in so far as Lot is concerned. The same two angels go to Sodom to fulfil their tragic ministry, that of destruction, and there is revealed the cesspool of iniquity which that place was, crying to high heaven for judgment. But let us remember the Lord Jesus draws a very serious comparison in His day between the men of Sodom and "this generation" (See Matthew, 10 : 15, and 11 : 23, 24). Greater light or privilege brings greater responsibility. But there are bright spots even here (see verses 15-22) "the Lord being merciful unto him" and then Lot's intercession for Zoar, and again the words of the angel "I cannot do anything till thou be come thither" and v. 29 "the Lord remembered Abraham and sent Lot out . . ." Can we over estimate the grace and mercy of our God, even in judgment he remembers mercy, and cannot proceed until His believing ones are safe, even though they be out of touch with Him and His will. What condescending Grace!

"Remember Lot's wife," the Lord Jesus said, (Luke 17 : 32) and the two verses, preceding and succeeding give a new meaning to what his wife did. Was it that she did more than merely look back? Did she "look with regretful longings" or even "turn back"? and so was in the overthrow? See v. 17. Poor Lot, though a righteous man vexing his righteous soul from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked, as Peter tells us, and this chapter gives the background of this vile and filthy place. It seems to us from what follows that it would have been better had Lot

lost his two daughters also, for they had the morals of Sodom. It does not seem very clear whether Lot had altogether four daughters, two of them married to Sodomites (see vv. 12, 14) who perished in the overthrow. The latter part of this chapter is sad and solemn indeed, and gave rise to two nations, Ammon and Moab, whose history is marked out for us in the remainder of the Old Testament and which hold solemn lessons for us. See for instance the Ammonites mentioned in I Kings 11 : 1-8 and II Chron. 12 : 13 etc. The reader should trace the history of these two nations and mark their enmity to the children of God. And let the worldly carnal believer take due warning. Their long history, full of wickedness and idolatry is traced for us throughout the Old Testament from Numbers to Zephaniah, and all stemming from the backsliding of a "righteous man," Lot !

Note that the inhabitants of these cities have yet to come up for individual judgment (Matthew 10 : 15 and 11 : 24). The sites of these cities are not known though some think they are under the Dead (or Salt) Sea.

(To be continued)

CAMEOS OF CHRIST (2)

by **JOHN B. D. PAGE**

HIS GIRDLES

IN BIBLE times, girdles were worn by men, women and children, and the material, of which a girdle was made, indicated the social position of the wearer. Linen and silk girdles, sometimes embroidered with gold, were worn by royalty and nobility (Jeremiah 13 : 1, and Daniel 10 : 5), whilst leather girdles were worn by peasants, as Elijah and John the Baptist wore (II Kings 1 : 8, and Matthew 3 : 4).

Four times in Scripture we read of the Lord Jesus wearing a girdle, and on each occasion a different facet of His Person is brought before us.

1. The pre-incarnate Christ

Like other prophets of old, when in exile, Daniel now in advanced years beheld in a vision "a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girdled with fine gold of Uphaz." The prophet of deep spiritual insight saw that the man's body was like a beryl, his face was of lightning-like brilliance, his penetrative eyes were lamps as of fire, his arms and feet were

like brass in colour, whilst his voice was authoritative (Daniel 10 : 5-7). This man could not have been an angel, not even Gabriel, but he was undoubtedly the pre-incarnate Christ, because later angels appeal to the same Man as having superior knowledge (12 : 5-7). Only Daniel saw the vision, whilst his companions sensed the divine presence in their midst.

The linen clothing of the Man is undoubtedly a symbol of righteousness, and the girdle of fine gold is suggestive of the dignity of this eternally righteous Person. This Man, beheld by Daniel, belonged not to time but eternity, and having neither beginning of days nor end of life, He is before all things. The eternal being of this Man distinguished Him from all other men known to Daniel.

Not even during His days of Manhood upon the earth did the Son of God set aside His golden girdle of eternal Sonship. In these days of compromise and indifference concerning not only Christian conduct but also doctrine, we need to cling tenaciously to this vital truth !

2. The humiliation of Christ

The only recorded occasion of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh wearing a girdle is in John 13. For the background, let us remember that every room of an Eastern house, except that belonging to the very poorest, had the central part of the floor covered with white mats and, as a person entered he took off his sandals at the door of the room, in order not to soil the white matting with dust and dirt of the road. Before reclining at the table, Jesus and the disciples had undoubtedly conformed to this custom of cleanliness, but another customary habit had apparently been neglected—the washing of their feet, which was the work of slaves. And so, during supper, Jesus arose, laying aside His two garments, as though He were the meanest slave, and “took a towel, and girded Himself.” After pouring water into the large copper bowl, with which an Oriental house was provided, He began to wash His disciples’ feet and to wipe them dry with the towel which served Him as a girdle (John 13 : 4f). Instead of one of the disciples taking the slave’s place and washing the Master’s feet, the Master took the slave’s place and washed the disciples feet. What an example of self-denial and service !

Not Mark, who sets forth Christ as the Servant, but John, who presents Christ as being from eternity "with God," and "was God" relates the story. Hence, in this setting of the fourth Gospel, we behold how He, Who ever was "in the form of God," "took the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:6f). The Master is greater than the servant, the Sender greater than the apostle ('the sent one'), and yet He, who is both Lord and Master, girded Himself with a towel and did the work of a slave. Awe and shame kept the disciples silent until Jesus came to Peter, who indignantly asked, "Lord, dost **Thou** wash my feet?"—"Dost Thou, whom I confessed to be Son of the living God, stoop to wash **my** feet?" Oh, the grace of Him that ministered! What meanness of him to whom the service would be done!

(To be continued)

Apostolic Obedience

by W. WILLIAMS (Venezuela)

EVERY Christian will concede that the Apostle Paul was "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him (Christ) to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1. 16). He was a pattern in his conversion, in his walk and in his service for the Lord. He knew *how*, *when* and *where* the great transaction took place that changed his course, his life and his destiny. What a blessing it is to have a real conversion! How good to be able to tell how Christ was revealed to the soul! It is possible that some do not know the *when* or others the *where*, but no one will be in heaven who cannot tell the *how*. There must be a definite experience in every conversion.

Saul means "wished" or "asked." It is in keeping with his name, therefore, that the first words we have recorded of the great Apostle are two questions. "Who art Thou, Lord?" and "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9. 5, 6). From the very first he learned that Jesus was Lord, acknowledging Him as "Master" or "Supreme Ruler." Now to know Jesus as Lord is a revelation of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12. 3).

"Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" ought to be the first question from every truly saved soul. We believe that the Spirit of God prompts such a question from the heart of the babe in Christ. But alas! alas! instead of looking to the Risen Head of the Church for the answer, as did Saul, the majority

are gagged by tradition and swaddled by denominational bias. Notice that a sincere question ever gets a divine answer, "Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou *must do*" (Acts 9. 16).

Saul had learned that Christ was absolute Lord and that he was the Lord's bond slave, so that implicit obedience was expected from him. "Must do" left no room for the present day conventional phrase of "essential and non-essential" discrimination, as to the carrying out of God's Word. Consequently, it is natural to read that Saul's first step after conversion was baptism. He "arose and was baptised." He had already been baptised into one body by the Spirit of God, the moment that he was saved (Eph. 1, 13 ; 1 Cor. 12. 13). But now he was buried with Christ by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so he also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6. 4). This was baptism in water which in this dispensation always succeeds and never precedes the baptism of the Spirit. No Christian can call Jesus, Lord, who has never obeyed His command in Matt. 28. 19.

The next thing that we notice Saul did was to seek the fellowship of the Lord's people in Jerusalem. It is good to begin in Jerusalem. Barnabas commended him to the Apostles, with the result that he was received into the Assembly in Jerusalem. Happily for him, he knew nothing of that strange anomaly called "occasional or partial fellowship." He had been out and out before his conversion, so, now that he was the bond slave of his Lord, he wished no compromise or half measure, but a full fellowship in all the privileges and responsibilities of the Jerusalem Church. "He was with them coming in and going out" all the time he spent in that city.

There are two ordinances to be obeyed by every Christian who would call Jesus, Lord. They are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. When Saul was in Jerusalem he would partake of the symbolic bread and wine, with the Lord's people. Years later he kept on doing it, for at Troas we read that "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" Paul was with them. When he was in Jerusalem, he was in the Assembly breaking bread on the first day of the week, and now some twenty-five years later in Troas, he was carrying out the same order with the Lord's people in that place. In other words, Paul was not a man of mixed principles.

He taught and carried out the same order in every church.

Unfortunately, in our day, it is policy and not piety, that is the guiding principle with some who ought to know better. Convenience is easier to carry out than conviction. Paul knew nothing of being double tongued. The ungodly termed him "a pestilent fellow," the carnal Christians accused him of guile and double dealing, and the erstwhile friends in Asia turned away from him, probably because he would have no compromise with the legalists as to divine grace, and no entangling of himself with the affairs of this world in its religious, political and social aspects.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" was Saul's question, and thirty years later we get Paul's answer: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4. 13). He had been baptised, gathered to His name and had preached the Gospel where Christ was not named. He had proved that God's biddings are God's enablings. He finished as he began. "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" was his first question, and "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" was his last testimony (2 Tim. 4. 17). It was the Lord's will first and the Lord's will last that mattered most with Christ's most faithful servant.

Is this not an example that we should follow, in these closing days, when love for the Lord and His name is on the wane? The elder brethren who proved the Lord and bought His truth are passing Home. They pioneered, went into new places, paying their board and renting halls, saw souls saved and assemblies formed. But of late years a new generation of preachers has sprung up, some of whom seem only to be among the assemblies for convenience, as their sympathies are with the sects and their teaching and example tend to destroy a distinctive and separate church testimony. There is usually much music, more emotion and many appeals. Such preaching produces little conviction of sin, and many of the so-called converts are "strange children" with no appetite for God's word or His ways.

Where modern methods are in vogue, do we wonder that the Lord's people are spiritually starved? They seldom hear the whole counsel of God and consequently such are drifting back to sectarianism. Not a few of the Lord's servants are perplexed as to fellowship with them while others are afraid to declare all the truth of the Word to them. Undoubtedly it is becoming

a real difficulty for the servant who desires to please the Lord. Personally we have been much helped by that grand word in 2 Tim. 2. 15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." It keeps one's eye on the Lord and not on men. Men may, and probably will oppose us. They will do their best to close doors once open to us. They will cut us off from their fellowship. But we have abundantly proved the truth of that promise, "Them that honour me I will honour." It pays to fear God, and know no other fear. Let us be true to God and to His beloved people. Let us set our face as a flint against the inroads of the enemy, who would lead the Lord's people back to the beggarly elements of this present age.

The end cannot be far off. What a joy it will be to be found faithful at that day, and to hear from His lips, the highest of all commendations: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Notice that He will not say "successful" servant. Men appreciate success, but God loves faithfulness. Men look at the outward numbers and show but the Lord searcheth the heart.

Saul of Tarsus asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" After thirty years of experience and now called "Paul the aged" he could write, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me." May the Lord help us to be loyal to the truth in love, and in all our service for Him, first ask the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He will answer and guide us as He did Saul of Tarsus, in a bygone day.

Correspondence

DEAR EDITOR,

As I move about considerably it has not been my privilege to see and read the issues of the magazine regularly. But recently I have seen the Jan.-Feb., also the March-April issues. And I am taking the liberty of writing regarding some things in the first article by Dr. John Boyd on "The Things that are." I am glad to see that the word angel is considered as referring to men and not to a celestial being. When sharing a reading with Mr. W. E. Vine many years ago in Plas Menai he was very warm in his approval of that interpretation, referring them to those who are the channels of communication between the Lord and his people, those whom the Lord holds responsible for the spiritual condition of the assemblies, just as Aaron was held responsible for the failure of Israel in the worship of the golden calf. Moses charged him with having brought a great sin upon the people. Ephraim would be an illustration of the "angel."

But I wish to draw attention to a few matters which I feel are of importance.

1. The word "Revelation" (v. 1). In a book of Hort's "Notes on Rev., chs. 1-3," which was published after he died, he argues very strongly that the words "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" are to be understood as the objective genitive. That Hort was a very competent Greek scholar is a known fact. As an illustration of the two kinds of genitive one might quote a few scriptures. When we read of the faith of Abraham or the faith of Moses we understand it that it refers to the faith they exercised, but when we read in Gal. 2:20 of the "faith of Jesus Christ," it is evident that it must be understood as the objective genitive, and interpreted as the faith which placed in Him. He is the object of faith. So I take it in Rev. 1:1 it is the unveiling of Jesus Christ as that unveiling is unfolded in the visions that follow. It is history in relation to His unveiling.

2. His suggested interpretations of the seven churches or seven lampstands. Primarily they refer to the seven assemblies mentioned. Dr. Boyd suggests three deductions or interpretations. He does not give any scripture for adopting or refusing either of the three interpretations suggested, save the general statement "the things that are," and that he seems to apply only to the present, the time in which we now live. He makes however seven charges against the prophetic view. Before considering a few of them I should draw attention to some solid reasons based on scripture for accepting the prophetic view. Those of your readers who have the book on Bible Problems by the late W. Hoste and W. Rodgers will doubtless have seen the answer given by W.R. to the question as to whether these are to be considered prophetic or not. Many years ago I discussed the subject with him when at the Lurgan Bible Readings. He said he would base his conclusion that the letters are prophetic on Rev. 1:3 "the words of THIS prophecy" as being applicable to the whole of the book, and not to just chs. 4 on. He considered that verse to be sufficient to establish the prophetic character of the letters. A brief reference must be made to the charges laid against the view.

(a) Nowhere else in Scripture are we told of seven such church periods—such a clear statement would obviously do away with the imminence of the Lord's return which is so clearly taught by the Apostle. But nevertheless does not the historical sequence of the O.T. events referred or alluded to in the letters suggest that the course of the church would be similar to that revealed in the history of Israel? And is there not a prophetic outline of the course of Christendom clearly delineated in the parables of Matthew 13?

(b) Does our brother really believe that the large number of able teachers, the large number of able godly men who in the past have taught the prophetic view are really guilty of the charge in Rev. 22:18? and therefore subject to the judgment mentioned in that verse?

(c) I find it difficult to understand how the view leads to date-fixing. Looking back over the history we cannot help but look at

dates. But the novel idea that it leads to date-fixing as to the future is entirely wrong. Hence the prophetic view in no way clashes with Rev. 22:20-21.

(d) One wonders what are the questions of little profit which it is said the prophetic view leads to. It would be interesting to know. They should be pointed out, as such a general charge cannot be considered.

(e) It causes us to miss the practical lessons and panders to vanity!!! For over twenty years now I have been seeking to give ministry on these letters, and I know of no portion which lends itself more to practical teaching than when viewing these letters in a prophetic way, and one might well ask is there any portion that is more humbling? The historical events in the O.T. which are mentioned or alluded to in the epistles are surely milestones in the highway of faith in the past, and indicate that the same milestones have been passed by the pilgrim church. Do not the allusions to Genesis in the first letter—the tree of life, the paradise of God, and “thou art fallen” clearly point to the commencement or the close of the apostolic days? Does not the fact that message to the overcomer in the last refer to the Lord’s ascension indicate the consummation of a period? The prophetic view does not need for its explanation information outside the scripture. The O.T. events and the periods connected with them are in themselves a commentary on the state of the various churches in connection with which these events are recorded. However that does not mean that we are to be blind to the history of the past 1900 years, nor should we fail to see in them parallels with what was seen by the seer of Patmos. Do not the seven departures in Israel’s history recorded in the book of the Judges ending with a blind Samson parallel the seven conditions in letters ending with blind Laodicea?

J. M. DAVIES.

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GRACE TRUTH

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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THE SON OF GOD

—: :—

*He was RICH beyond all human telling,
Through the vast ages, of the eternal past ;
The "Lofty One" eternity His dwelling,
Creations "Workman" He the first and last.*

*"The Living One" from whom all life must spring ;
"The WORD Eternal," heart of God expressed ;
"The One Whose voice did out of chaos bring,
The earth in all its wondrous beauty dressed.*

*Yes! He was rich, in wisdom, knowledge, might
And all the Godhead's fulness, vast, unknown ;
This we know, from God's own Word of Light.
"The Heir of all things," high upon the throne.*

*"Rich in His Fathers Glory" and His Grace,
There in His loving bosom ever dwelling,
While the sweet melody of Angelic praise,
"To Him" their voices aye were swelling.*

*Oh wondrous home of peace and love,
Where He forever dwelt in glory bright.
Enthroned and crowned in majesty above,
"Himself" the source of Heaven's love and light.*

THE THINGS WHICH ARE

by Dr. JOHN BOYD

The Letter to the Church in Smyrna (Revelations 2 : 8-11)

...

THE next church chosen by the Lord for investigation was that found in Smyrna, a city 35 miles north of Ephesus. Smyrna is the word translated 'myrrh' in Mark 15 : 23, a bitter, aromatic gum, one of the ingredients of the drink offered to the Lord on Calvary. It would seem by what the Lord reveals concerning this church that its name is reflected in its experiences. Bitter was the cup it was called to drink—tribulation, pseudo-Jewish opposition, poverty, suffering, imprisonment, trials and even martyrdom, as was the lot of Polycarp, one of the early fathers resident there. Whilst churches in the Western world to-day are relatively immune from these bitter onslaughts such are the trials of some of our brethren, especially those in communist countries. These churches find consolation and comfort in this letter. The Lord knows all about their bitter tribulation, their poverty, their reproach.

The title by which the Lord introduces Himself to Smyrna is taken from the revelation of His identity He gave to John in Revelation 1 : 17-18. He speaks of Himself as 'the first and the last,' indicating His eternal being, and essential deity. He seems to take to Himself the words of Moses in Psalm 90 : 2, 'from everlasting to everlasting Thou are God.' Then He reminds the suffering church in Smyrna that He 'became dead, and lived again' (R.V.m.), that is, He had triumphed over death. Thus the One who sent this message to the church would encourage its members by telling them of His perfect suitability to sympathise with them in their afflictions, for He, too, had suffered, and had been through death. That He had risen triumphantly from the grave imparted to them the assurance that His promise of a crown of life (v. 10) was no idle boast.

The Lord tells of His knowledge concerning the church—what He had observed in them. Some Mss. omit the words 'thy works,' What was evident to the Lord was the tribulation through which they were passing.. The word 'tribulation' suggests straitened circumstances, pressure from without,

oppression from others. This was accompanied by poverty—the lack of the necessities of life, possibly because their profession of faith in Christ had brought reproach upon them, with consequent excommunication and neglect by their kith and kin.

The Lord's commentary on the state of the church follows. Whilst in the eyes of the world they were poor, towards God they were possessed of divine riches, wealth that really mattered; they were laying up in heaven treasures for themselves; they accounted 'the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,' for, like Moses, they 'looked unto the recompense of the reward' (Hebrews 11 : 26). What a lesson for believers to-day who pay so much respect to the opinions and occupation of the world, and follow its customs! The Judgment Seat of Christ in a future day will reveal their folly.

But the Lord had also something to say by way of condemnation. Is it that some in the church claimed to be of Jewish descent, and possibly had introduced Judaistic teaching? By their revilement of true believers had they denied that they were truly born again? Their habits were not those of a Jewish synagogue, but of a synagogue of Satan. They were of their father the devil. Or it may be that what is here intended is the tribulation from so-called Jews outside the assembly. This is more likely in view of a similar expression in Rev. 3 : 9, where the 'synagogue of Satan' in Philadelphia refers to Jews apart from the church. A similar position was seen in Ephesus (Acts 19 : 9). The Jews spake evil of 'the Way,' and seized some of the believers (vv. 29, 33). Their circumcision was merely outward, in the flesh, not inwardly, in the spirit, of the heart (Romans 2 : 28). Being of 'the synagogue of Satan' would correspond with the intentions of the devil in v. 10.

Not only did the Lord know the tribulation through which the church had passed, but He was aware of what lay ahead of them. Suffering would continue to be their lot, but they must not be afraid. He who was 'the first and the last' knew all about the infliction—past, present and future; He knew the purpose of their suffering—to test their faithfulness; He knew what they would suffer—imprisonment; He knew also the duration of their tribulation—ten days. These may have been literal days, or more likely, days symbolising ten years. We

know not how long it would last, but we know that what the Lord revealed to them was the fact that He knew all about their trial, its duration, and more important, that it would have an end. Ten is the number of completeness, telling of the full share of tribulation they must endure. What a word of comfort this must have been to the suffering church! What a consolation it brings to us to realise that the same Lord Jesus to-day knows all about our sufferings, whether they be oppression, poverty, testing, reviling.

He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing His sight can dim:
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.

In view of all this the Lord exhorts the church to faithfulness, even to death itself, should that be the outcome of their tribulation. He said in effect, 'Let not thy faithfulness to Me stop short of enduring death itself.' For such loyalty the Lord has a sure reward—'I will give thee a crown of life.' This is a picture taken from the Greek games, when he who had finished first in the race, and had triumphed, received the victor's crown, a garland. But it was a wreath of laurel leaves that soon withered. The garland of the faithful martyr is no withering, fading trophy, but an incorruptible, unfading crown—a crown of life. It is one of seven crowns promised to believers in the New Testament,

(1) **The Incorruptible Crown**—for successful runners in the Christian race (1 Corinthians 9 : 25).

(2) **The Crown of Rejoicing**—for evangelists who will meet their converts at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Thessalonians 2 : 19).

(3) **The Crown of Righteousness**—for those who served Christ with their eyes on the Lord's Second Coming (2 Timothy 4 : 8, Revelations 3 : 10).

(4) **The Crown of Life**—for believers who have been patient in tribulation (James 1 : 12).

(5) **The Crown of Glory**—for overseers who have devotedly tended the flock of God (1 Peter 5 : 4).

(6) **The Crown of Life**—for Christian martyrs (Revelations 2 : 10).

(7) **The Crown of Gold**—for believers who have suffered, with a view to reigning later with Christ (Revelations 4 : 4).

The primary function of these crowns is not for the personal decoration of believers, but for the recipients to cast them at the feet of their beloved Lord in a coming day—to add to His glory (Revelations 4 : 10). What an incentive to faithful perseverance, that we might the more fully express our worship to Him who has done so much for us!

Whilst this message was sent to the church at Smyrna, the Lord would emphasise the fact that it was intended by the Spirit to be received and acted upon by all the churches, in all places, at all times, and even by us to-day.

Next follows the Lord's promise to the individual overcomer, the true believer in the church. He would not be hurt of the second death. Overcoming might mean martyrdom for him, but even then only once would death touch him, and that would be physical death. The second death—banishment to the lake of fire for eternity (Revelations 20 : 14), would have no terrors for him; it will be the judgment on those whose names are not found written in the book of life (Revelation 20 : 15). Let us who are born again rejoice because such a sentence will not be our portion. With the poet we may confidently say, 'The torment and the fire mine eyes shall never see.' What a great salvation is ours! What a great Saviour we have in the Lord Jesus Christ!

NOTES ON PETER'S EPISTLES

by **WM. RODGERS**

THE second paragraph of the two that make up our chapter (i.e., 2 Peter 1 : 12-21) has as its main features of interest, the reference to the Transfiguration, and that to the character and use of the written Word of God. The latter subject, as was pointed out in an earlier paper, is given prominence throughout Peter's epistles, but nowhere does he deal with it so fully as here.

In verses 12-15, the apostle speaks of his desire that the saints may be kept in remembrance of the truths which he has already been bringing before them; and that, not only during the short time he may be yet with them, but also after he shall have been taken from them. And his statement concerning this in verse 15, "I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in

remembrance," evidently implies an expectation on his part that his writings will find a place in those Scriptures to which, in days to come, the saints will turn for guidance. In chapter 3 : 15, 16 we see him giving to the epistles of Paul a similar place amongst the "Scriptures."

The Voice and the Word

In verses 16-18 he reminds them of what was to himself an unforgettable confirmation of the truth of the earlier Scriptures, as well as of the reality of "the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"—the scene on the mount of the Transfiguration. There he had been an eye-witness of the "majesty" of his Lord, and had seen in His company, the two great representatives of "the Law and the prophets." He had heard them conversing with Him about "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem;" and, more wonderful still, had heard the "Voice" which Moses and Elijah, alone amongst the prophets, had been privileged to hear in former days (see Numbers 12 : 6-8; Exodus 19 : 19; 1 Kings 19 : 12-13); and which now proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The apostle's readers had not personally the privilege that was his on this occasion; but they possessed the prophetic Word, of which it is an illustration and confirmation, and which was itself just as really "from heaven," as was the Voice heard on the mount. Peter directs our attention to this comparison between the two by using, twice with regard to each, a word meaning "brought" or "borne" (see margin of R.V., or Newberry). The Voice "was BORNE to Him from (rather 'by') the excellent glory" (v. 17), and it "was BORNE from heaven" (v. 18). Similarly the prophetic Word "was BORNE, not by will of man" (v. 21), but "men spake from God, being BORNE by the Holy Ghost" (v. 21).

A Lamp in a Dark Place

This being so, it follows that saints should give careful heed to the Word, "as unto a lamp shining in a dark place;" but it also follows that in doing so they need to remember that "no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." Only the Holy Spirit who dictated it can explain it, either to the writer (1st Peter 1 : 10-12), or to the reader (1 Cor. 2 : 10-12).

The words in verse 19, "Until the day dawn and the day-

star arise," must necessarily refer to the Lord's Coming; for the dawn of day is here viewed as bringing to an end the need for the lamp, and since the lamp is the Word, it is unthinkable that any event or attainment, short of the Coming, could be looked upon as ending the saint's dependence on it for guidance. But taking this view of the verse, its last three words seem to present a difficulty, and the question might be asked, Why, if it be the Coming that is referred to, should the daystar be said to "arise in your hearts?" To this it may be replied that if our Lord's Coming does not dwell in our hearts as something to which we longingly look forward, we have little right to reckon ourselves amongst His people; and if it does so dwell, there is nothing farfetched in describing its actual occurrence, from a subjective point of view, as the rising up in our hearts in daylight splendour of that which has been treasured in them and has been a light to us all the way along. It is not a matter of having a clear apprehension of the order and manner of the Coming, but of being true in heart to our Lord during His absence, and longing for Him to appear.

But perhaps the explanation, first suggested by Tregelles and since then adopted by various commentators, is the true one. He treats the illustrative portion of the verse, from "as" to "arise" as parenthetical, and links the final "in your hearts" with the previous "take heed." Thus the exhortation would read, "To which ye do well that ye take heed (as unto a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the daystar arise) in your hearts;" or simply, "To which ye do well that ye take heed in your hearts, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the daystar arise." In support of this view, he refers to 1 Peter 3:21 as a similar example of parenthesis in Peter's style of writing.

A Holy Calling

The apostle's use, here and elsewhere, of the word "holy" is worthy of notice, for it us one of many links which show the two epistles to be the works of the same author. It is found eight times in the first letter and six times in the second, one occurrence in each case being of the Holy Spirit; but what is most remarkable is the variety in the nouns to which it is prefixed. In 1st Peter 1:15,16 he repeats it four times in the command, "As He which hath called you is holy, so

be ye holy . . . ; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." In ch. 2 : 5 he writes of " an holy priesthood," in ch. 2 : 9 of ' an holy nation," and in ch. 3 : 5 of " the holy women " of olden time. In 2nd Peter 1 : 18 he uses it of " the holy mount," in ch. 1 : 21 of " holy man of God," in ch. 2 : 21 of " the holy commandment," in ch. 3 : 2 of " the holy prophets; and finally in ch. 3 : 11 he urges upon his readers " all holy conversation and godliness."

The above references in ch. 1 : 21 and ch. 3 : 2 to the holy character of those whom God used in giving us His Word stand out the more prominently by contrast with the uncleanness attributed to the " teachers of falsehood " of chapter 2, and to the " mockers " of truth of chapter 3. Turning from the first chapter to the second is like coming down from the scene on the " holy mount " to the sordid and corrupting scenes below. While Peter at ch. 1 : 16 speaks of " the Power and Coming " of our Lord, we meet at ch. 2 : 1 (see R.V.) with those who deny His Power, and at ch. 3 : 3, 4 with those who deny His Coming. And as one great object before the apostle, when writing this letter, was to stir up the minds of the saints in remembrance of the truths they had learned in the past; so another was to warn them of the errors with which they would be called upon to contend in the future.

DANIEL THE PROPHET

by A. J. ATKINS

Chapter 2

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream . . . World Empires

EARLY in his reign the mighty Nebuchadnezzar was much concerned for the future of his far flung empire, and even on his bed, thoughts troubled him, Ch. 2 v. 1, 29. He did not realise that with all his power he was but a servant, a tool to work out the purpose of the almighty God of heaven, as had been stated in earlier prophecy, Jer. 27.5-9. When the wickedness of Jerusalem reached a climax, God used this servant as an instrument of judgment.

The chapter divides into six parts (i) The forgotten dream, v. 1-3, (ii) Failure of the wise men and the command to destroy them, v. 4-16. (iii) The prayer meeting and answer, v. 17-19. (iv) Praise, and testimony before the king, v. 20-29. (v) The dream and its interpretation, v. 29-45, (vi) The effect

on the king and on Daniel and his companions, v. 46-49.

Though all nations and men trembled before the fierce wrath of the mighty king, he himself trembled at a dream, v. 1, 3. Whether he really forgot, or made his demand to test the sincerity of the interpretation is not stated, but when the wise men answered a second time that the demand was unreasonable the king accused them of duplicity, v. 8, 9, "the thing is gone from me . . . ye have prepared lying words." Daniel and his companions seem to have been absent until the decree to destroy all the wise men is made, when Daniel gently seeks for time v. 15. Confident in his God, Daniel promises a solution. This attitude of faith was rewarded, initially by a changed attitude of the king, permitting time to be given after previously refusing to give any time, v. 8, 12 and 16, and subsequently, after prayer. What a prayer meeting. All four unitedly pleading "mercies of the God of heaven" v. 18. Completely helpless, they seek to know God's secret, that they might be delivered. What power there is in united fervent, believing prayer. (See Acts 12.5-14, 16, 17). See also how prayer turns to praise, v. 20. Our God is One Who holds all in His hand; wisdom and might are His, and He knoweth what is in the darkness, v. 20-22. Neither wise men, nor magicians may know, but God in heaven can reveal secrets, vs. 27, 28, 30.

With all his power, under the burden of affairs of the empire, Nebuchadnezzar was still concerned about the future as v. 1 and v. 29 show. Most people today, including rulers, are so concerned about the present that the future is little considered. Even some of those who profess to belong to Christ take little heed to the sure word of prophecy and so miss both the warning and the consolation which comes from the revelations God has given us concerning things which must come to pass. Nebuchadnezzar was sufficiently alert to realise that this was no ordinary dream. His spirit was troubled as he saw the image, so insecure, deteriorating in intrinsic value from head to foot, decreasing in density and thus so unstable that it is completely overthrown by means far beyond the work of man, a stone cut out without hands. Listening to the recounting of his dream, he is amazed that such a secret thing should be revealed to a young man, but Daniel stands boldly protesting that it is not skill of his own, nor his wisdom, but that it is the God of his fathers, the God in heaven who is making known to the king the destiny of empires right through the ages until

“the latter days,” that is, the end of the times of the Gentiles, v. 23, 28, 30. Nobly and firmly Daniel asserted to the perplexed and troubled king “there is a God in heaven.” Though mankind no longer recognises Him, though His people Israel are scattered, and His glory is withdrawn from Jerusalem, He now, as “the God in heaven,” waits until at the end of the time, He will return to reign on earth in millennial glory, and after the thousand years and final overthrow of sin and darkness, to reign eternally over new heavens and a new earth. The majestic title “the God of heaven” occurs only in the books which speak of the scattering, judgment, and careful restoring of Israel, the books of Jonah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Revelation.

It was common practice for conquerors and potentates to make huge monuments, as for example those in Egypt, and the form was frequently that of some god, but the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was appropriately that of a man, symbolising world empires in man’s day as distinct from “The Day of the Lord.” The declining values from gold to iron and clay show degeneration of strength and of regal power and authority. The four parts, gold, silver, brass (or copper) and of iron merging to iron mixed with clay (or pottery) represent empires. The first three are stated in the book to be Babylon, ch. 2: 37-38, and the succeeding world empire of Medo-Persia, ch. 5: 28-31, whilst chapter 7 records the passing of the power of Persia to another defined in ch. 8: 20-21 as the Grecian empire. The fourth empire, represented by the legs of iron and feet and toes of clay, is not named. As the Grecian empire was followed by a world-wide Roman empire, almost every commentator discusses the fitness of the symbol in representing the Roman power. Ancient Rome, however, did not completely fulfil the pattern represented by the image, and, therefore this world power is not named. Some six hundred years must elapse before God could reveal “the mystery hid in God” the dispensation of grace for the calling out of the Church during the interval which occurs before the fulfilment of the events represented by the toes of the image.

The interpretation from v. 37-39 is now history accurately foretold. The head of gold is said to be Nebuchadnezzar. Notice the title given by Daniel v. 37, king of kings. This accords with the words of Jeremiah (ch. 25:9 27:7 and 28:14). Gold, speaking of divinity is a fitting symbol for one

who swayed an autocratic power under direct divine authority, to some extent manifesting the dominion power given to Adam (Gen. 1.28) but forfeited by the fall. The Babylonian power continued under Evil-Merodach (2 Kings 25:27), Neriglasser, Nabonidus and his weak son Belshazzar acting as regent, until 538 B.C. when Cyrus took Babylon, and Darius the Mede became ruler ch. 5:31.

From this event, for centuries, until the rise of Alexander the Great and his world conquest, the Medo-Persian empire ruled the world. This was represented in the image by the breast and arms of silver. Two years after the conquest of Babylon as foretold by the prophet Isaiah, Cyrus acted on behalf of the exiles to help forward the restoration. "Cyrus, he is My shepherd and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying of Jerusalem, she shall be built: and to the temple, thy foundations shall be laid." Is. 44:28. These words of the prophet, nearly two hundred years earlier, were fulfilled in 536 B.C. when Cyrus issued the decree authorising the return of the exiles from Babylon, Ezra 1. 1-4. For some time at least, Daniel remained as one appointed by Darius as a president over other governors (Dan. 6.1-3) for in ch. 10 he is still away by the banks of the Tigris. The Medo-Persian empire continued its sway, and in 485 B.C. Xerxes I (or Ahasuerus) became King of Persia. Of his power it is written that "he reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces" Esther 1. 1. He was followed by Artaxerxes in 465 who, in his twentieth year of reign issued the decree for the restoring of Jerusalem, Neh. 2.1-9, from which date commences the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy Dan. 9.24, the prophecy leading up to the time called "the acceptable year of the Lord" is 61:2 and then on to "the time of the end."

Just over one hundred years later, 336 B.C. Alexander the Great became king of Macedon: thus in the imagery of the dream, the silver breast and arms passed on to the "belly and thighs of brass . . . another third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth" ch. 2:32, 39. These two empires are also typified in chapter 8 by "the ram which had two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia," these are set aside by "the rough he-goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." Dan. 8:20, 21. This second picture of the successive world empires

was given in vision to Daniel, and also another vision, ch. 11, refers to the breaking up of the second empire, and the confusion attending the disruption of the third empire, ch. 11:3, 4. In all this confusion, the Jews suffered great oppression and made an appeal to Rome, v. 30, and the fourth empire begins to appear.

ABRAHAM—FRIEND OF GOD

by **R. WOODHOUSE BEALES**

Chapter 20

ABRAHAM'S SECOND LAPSE

Again Abraham puts his wife in jeopardy through his fear. Why was he journeying from the place of Communion and going down to Gerar, near to the Philistine country? His son, Isaac, later on did exactly the same. Are we to go as near as we can to the place of temptation? Some Christians do and then wonder at the troubles that come upon them. Suffice it to say that once again God has to intervene and protect His own miraculously and again Abraham is rebuked by the ungodly. His "testimony," if such it can be called, is a poor one. God "causing him to 'wander'" and yet the Lord makes the healing of the nation to stem from Abraham's prayer. "For he is a prophet" the first occurrence of this word, and also he was an intercessor. These are all salutary lessons for us in this day of compromise and unreality in the things of God and truth.

Genesis 21 THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

B**O****T****H** Abraham and Sarah in their old age had been "quickened" and this is referred to in Romans 4:17 indicating the mighty power of a life-giving God. The life He has given to us now is none other than the very resurrection life of our Lord Jesus Christ, not the life He had when incarnate among men, but His risen life. This is not very well known among believers. "Since ye then are risen with Christ" thus runs the divine record. Why then the low-level lives of believers? This quickening of the patriarch and his wife caused him to know God in a new way even as the God of Resurrection. If He could do this, then indeed nothing was impossible to Him and we shall see this in chapter 22.

God as the God of resurrection life is also to be seen similarly in the priest Zacharias and we append a comment by Mr. R. Jennings of Belfast. "Zacharias was old and so

was his wife . . . and it was highly improbable to say the least that a child could be born. But Zacharias must have been conversant with the scriptures and have known the case of Abraham and Sarah. The problems were the same and what God had done for Abraham and Sarah could He not do also for Zacharias and Elizabeth ? . . . Perhaps we could not expect Zacharias to spiritualise the Scriptures in the way we do nowadays, but a student of even the Old Testament could hardly miss the importance of numbers in the revelation of God's mind to His people. What more suitable bride could Isaac have, that man who stood on resurrection ground, than the daughter of the **eighth** child of Nahor and Milcah ? Noah was the **eighth** person (11 Peter 2 : 5) and he stood on the mountains of Ararat on the corresponding day of our Lord's resurrection . . . and Zacharias was of the order of Abia (Luke 1 : 5) which was the **eighth** (1 Chronicles 24 : 10). This was most appropriate to Zacharias, for to him specially God was the God of resurrection, and thus One Who could bring life out of death, even the deadness of his wife. (Romans 4 : 19.)" In the previous chapter a wife destroyed, here a wife quickened.

And now follows a most important and far reaching event in the casting out of the bond woman and her son Ishmael. Abraham had relinquished one after another of his ties of nature and now has to cast out Hagar and their son, for this was Abraham's son as well and it cost him much.

But Ishmael was mocking at Isaac who was to displace him. "Mocking" this record says, but further scriptures shew this to be much more than "mocking" even describing it as "persecuting." If Galatians 2 speaks of the blessing of Abraham, in contrast to the curse of the law, then the promise to Abraham through the seed, which the law could not over-ride, (chapter 4) takes up the present theme and deals with the two wives, the two sons, the two covenants etc. and speaks of the "persecution" of the son born "after the Spirit" by the "son born after the flesh." Also the persecution of the nation by the Egyptians, the "four hundred years" spoken of by God in chapter 15, dates from this event i.e. the birth of Isaac and the attitude of Ishmael, from all of which we gather that this mocking was far more than even most probably unto death, for the teaching based upon

mere laughter but had the ominous intent of persecution this envisages "life" and "death," but in the epistles spiritual life and death of which this was but a shadow.

The reader must read through the argument used by Paul and extract from it the spiritual teaching enshrined therein from Galatians 4 : 10 to 5 : 26 and Isaiah 54 : 1 etc. Time and space will not permit us to pursue this here but the reader is thus exhorted. This divine principle can be seen operating in three spheres, the first which is not here mentioned but is nonetheless real, the enmity between the children of Abraham, the natural children, (Israel as a nation) and the offspring of Ishmael, (the Mohammedan nations,) dire enmity between them and a determination for the extermination of the true seed who shall yet inherit the land. Next the contrast between the Israelites nationally, still in the flesh and unbelief and under the law, and the true Israel, the Spirit born seed; and next the enmity and conflict in the believer between the flesh and the Spirit. These are all hostile and cannot possibly be reconciled, and this is the subject of these passages. The same difference and conflict is seen in the encounter between the Lord Jesus and the Jews and the dire hostility shewn by the latter, even unto death. See John 8 : 30-59, a most important passage, where the Lord Jesus presses His enemies hard on this very subject of sonship and they take up stones to stone Him. The reader is exhorted to follow these out for they are vital to an understanding of the true position and relationship of the Christian and victory or defeat in the life. The passage in Romans 4 is slightly different and must be compared and contrasted. Romans has to do with the **earlier** life of the patriarch, Galatians with **this** period of his life.

Hagar was an Egyptian and Ishmael a half Egyptian, the nation which was to persecute and enslave the true seed and which had ultimately, and because of it, to be almost destroyed, but this casting out was grievous to Abraham but God assures him that it is the only way and indeed comes in at the last to preserve the lad whose cry was heard. See a comment on this situation in Isaiah 41 : 17.

All these truths shew to us the true character of the flesh, and in Galatians it includes, the religious flesh, the most subtle kind of all and most deceptive. and the utter necessity of knowing by experience the power of the Holy Spirit in the

life, first of all delivering from sin and self, and next empowering and fruit-bearing. How much do we know of this ?

The Well of the Oath

The latter part of this chapter is obscure in meaning but Beersheba becomes a landmark in the history of Israel, the words "from Dan to Beersheba" occurring seven times indicating the whole land of Palestine from the extreme North to the extreme South. This Abimelech may possibly be the same one who reproved Abraham over the matter of his wife Sarah, although it is believed that Abimelech is a Title rather than a name, but this episode shews that Abraham was recognised in spite of his lapses as being a man with whom God was, in all that he did. It is well that this is so, even in those in whom failure has been found, so let us take courage.

Why Abraham sojourns many days in Philistine country is not clear but here, though he has no altar yet he calls on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God (El Olam).

AT HIS FEET

by H. C. SPENCE

WE often delight to meditate upon the place that Mary of Bethany was found—"at the feet of the Lord Jesus."

We find Mary in this position on three different occasions, each one full of deepest meaning.

The first is found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10 : 39. **The place of Instruction**—"Mary which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word." We are reminded that Martha was occupied **for Him** but Mary was occupied **with Him**. Martha was careful and troubled about many things and the Lord tenderly recognised this but said to her, "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." How blessed it is to come aside from this restless world and its many distractions and to "sit at **His feet**" and learn of Him, for none teaches like Him

The next occasion we find Mary again "at His feet." **The place of Consolation**. In John's Gospel, chapter 11 we read of the sorrow that had entered into the home on the death of Lazarus. We note in verse 20 that "Martha as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming went and met Him, but Mary sat still in the house," She who sat "at His feet" and heard His Word did not move until the message came to her,

“The Master is come and calleth for thee” (verse 28). “She arose quickly and came to Him,” and in her deep sorrow she cast herself “at His feet,” “saying unto Him ‘Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died’” (verse 32) and then we have the shortest verse in the Bible, “Jesus wept” (and one of the profoundest) (verse 35). The Lord did not weep because Lazarus had died for He was to raise him from the dead “that the glory of God might be manifested,” but He wept because He saw what sin had wrought and the bereavement that followed. It was “at His feet” that she found consolation—a place so dear to the heart of Mary.

Let us turn to John’s Gospel, chapter 12, and we see Mary yet again “at His feet”—**The place of Adoration.** We find here a threefold cord—a family circle that had not been broken. Lazarus was there raised to life and liberty, Martha served this time in her rightful place and Mary whose longing was for the place of nearness “took a pound of ointment of spikenard very costly (very precious) and anointed His feet and wiped His feet with her hair and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” (verse 3). Truly Mary’s act of devotion to her Lord personifies worship which is the highest occupation of the soul.

RECOVERY AND ORDER

A comparison of Nehemiah and 1 Corinthians

by **BRYAN SMITH**

(No. 5)

FROM the call to self examination by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians we are reminded of Nehemiah’s narrative of the outcome of their dwelling in booths. “Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them” Nehemiah 9 : 1. The words of the Levites that follow are devoted to extolling the greatness of God in contrast to the littleness of man. In tracing the history of Israel, they bring out what God is in Himself, namely, righteous, gracious, forgiving, merciful, forbearing, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness vv. 8, 17, 19, 30, 31, 33, in contrast to man, who is proud, wilful, disobedient, rebellious, idolatrous, provocative, unthankful, wicked vv. 16, 18, 26, 28, 29, 33, 35. The result of their season of humiliation and self judgment was that the people bound themselves to

a covenant " And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites and priests, seal unto it " Nehemiah 9 : 38. Then follows the record of those who sealed the covenant representatively on behalf of the people. Nehemiah 10 : 1-27. They covenanted to wholeheartedly adhere to the law of God in its entirety, to refuse intermarriage with the people of the land, to observe the sabbaths and to ensure the maintenance and Divine service of the house of God (vv. 28-39). The sincerity of the people is most marked. The book does not end, however, without detailing the failure of the people to observe this covenant.

The covenant that the apostle has referred to is the new covenant which the Lord has made and not man. Good for us, brethren, that it is so. Suitably then, this paves the way to speak of the personal presence of the Holy Spirit in the assembly, who works to secure the honour of our Lord and the glory of God, gifting each believer as it pleases Him. 1 Corinthians 12 : 1-11. Despite diversity of gift there is unity v. 12. But in this unity variety and their essential diversity is to be maintained v. 14. But how do we view the baptism in the Spirit mentioned at v. 13 ? Once for all, never repeated (Holliday, Jardine, Fereday, Bruce). But will there be no outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a future day after the translation of the church ? " There are some who hold that the baptism of the Spirit was a once-for-all act, which took place at Pentecost when undoubtedly the one body was formed; but this verse seems to imply that drinking of the Spirit and being baptised in the Spirit are simultaneous experiences, in which case both take place at conversion." (McShane). In the baptism of the Holy Spirit I am immersed into the fulness of the Spirit, losing my individuality as part of the one body. To drink into one Spirit I retain my identity, personally appropriating the fulness of the Spirit to serve the interests of the one body. The apostle continues to illustrate from the natural body so as to encourage those brethren not yet participating in the exercises of the company vv. 15-17 and calls upon the more gifted men to consider their, as yet, less accomplished brethren, vv.18-31.

Notice is now made in Nehemiah 11 of those who were privileged to dwell at Jerusalem. It was the response of love to the place that God had set His heart upon. " And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves

to dwell at Jerusalem." Nehemiah 11 : 2. "They shall prosper that love thee" wrote the Psalmist of Jerusalem and so, too, the apostle Paul shows that love is indispensable to the spiritual prosperity of any assembly today.

Gift is unprofitable apart from love. 1 Corinthians 13 : 1-3. Its intrinsic excellence shows its superiority to any gift (vv. 4-7). Paul cites three gifts that were passing in the, then, childhood state of the church—prophesy, tongue, knowledge (vv.8-11). They were like the prophets in Moses day to whom the Lord spoke in a dream. But it was not so with Moses himself. "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches" (See Numbers 12 : 6-8). "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" 1 Corinthians 13 : 12. The vision and the dream give way to the clear, because written, Word of God. "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three;" How abideth?—eternally. (Bunting, Marsh, Vine). But according to Paul himself, faith will give place to sight (2 Corinthians 5 : 7) and hope to possession (Romans 8 : 24). The present state only (Kelly, Broadbent, Heading). It is "these three" as against the three temporary gifts previously mentioned. "But the greatest of these is love" (v. 13). Why? Because faith and hope flow from love, 'the root' (Vine). Because love remains unchanged in its nature. (Bruce). Because eternal. (Kelly, Heading). Because diffused, faith and hope personal. (Calvin, Leckie). Because faith and hope useless apart from love (Meyer). Because God is love (Godet, Bunting). That which is of the nature of God it greater than that which is connected with the capacity of human nature.

CAMEOS OF CHRIST (2)

by **JOHN B. D. PAGE**

HIS GIRDLES (continued)

3. The present glory of Christ

From a scene of the humiliation of Christ just before the Cross (John 13), symbolic of the great stoop that He made even unto death, we now pass to a vision of the risen and glorified Lord, which absorbed the attention of the exiled apostle John (Revelation 1 : 13-16). As Christ was seen standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands like the one which

lit the holy place of the tabernacle and the ten that later illumined the holy place of the temple, the imagery of the vision is drawn from the temple, and so throughout much of the Apocalypse.

This divine Figure is "clothed with a garment down to the foot." The same word is used in Exodus 28 : 4, and 31, LXX, of the robe worn by a high priest. Wearing the long blue robe of the ephod, Christ is also "girt about the paps with a golden girdle." This unusual position for a girdle has puzzled many, but a solution to the problem may be found in a later vision of the heavenly temple, when John saw seven angels, "clothed in pure and white linen and having their breasts girded with golden girdles" (Revelation 15 : 6). These seven angels, officiating in the heavenly temple and clad with priests' linen garments (cp. Exodus 28 : 40), are undoubtedly angel-priests, and their golden girdles were also at chest level instead of the usual position around the loins. Hence, in chapter 1, our blessed Lord, "girt about the paps with a golden girdle," is marked out in this manner as our great High Priest. The gold woven into this priestly girdle is a reminder of His divine nature and the glory of His Person.

The seven personal glories that follow, as beheld by John, are like a seven-light lampstand of the temple. The Voice is central, corresponding to the main shaft of a lampstand, whilst the other six features of His Person may be compared with the three pairs of lampstand branches. "His Voice" is described "as the sound of many waters," which is the same voice of "the Glory of the God of Israel," heard by Ezekiel (ch. 43 : 2). The Glory, as seen by Ezekiel in a vision, is not a symbol as in times past but a Person, even Messiah, Whom the prophet saw entering the temple to be built in the millennium. In his vision, John heard His Voice and in picturesque language borrowed from Ezekiel he says it was as the sound of many waters. As nothing can withstand the rushing waters of a river in flood, so who can challenge the resistless authority of Christ, the Head of the Church? The spirit of the age is to disregard, even to resist, authority, which leads to anarchy. It is evident in the world and even to some degree in assembly life where the Scriptures are not accepted as the final authority for belief and behaviour.

4. The millennial majesty of Christ

Looking into the future, Isaiah foresees at the close of chapter 10 the Antichrist as a proud cedar of Lebanon whose branches will be lopped by the Lord of Hosts. Immediately, in sharp contrast, he foretells in chapter 11 the coming of Christ as a Shoot out of the stock of Jesse and as a Branch bearing fruit. Describing the perfect character and virtues of Christ, the prophet says, "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him," which will be expressed by six spirits and they arranged in three dyads—"the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord"—they correspond to the tabernacle lampstand with its main stem and three pairs of branches from its sides.

Without differentiating between Messiah's first and second comings, Isaiah looks forward to the millennium. But before peace can be established, Messiah will slay His proud cedar-like opponent, the Antichrist, with the breath of His lips, and this He will do when He returns with the saints in power and glory. Cp. II Thessalonians 2:8.

Of the glorified Sovereign Lord, whose right it is to reign over the earth, the prophet says, "righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins" (11:5). This Old Testament seer is silent about the Coming King's raiment except for the royal girdle and then, instead of describing it, he gives its symbolical significance. Concerning His Person and character, he will be the epitome of righteousness. After the gross darkness and lack of righteousness during Antichrist's night of terror, Christ will arise as "the Sun of Righteousness" at the dawn of the millennial day. As the sun, "the greater light," was made to "rule the day" in the natural order of things, so "the Sun of Righteousness" will be the Righteous Ruler in the times of restoration of all things. Christ will reign as King and the name, by which a regenerate Israel will call Him, will be Jehovah-tsidkenu (Jeremiah 23:6), signifying that not only the King Himself will be righteous but also His subjects.

During Antichrist's short rule, there will be a lack of righteousness and yet "peace and safety" (II Thessalonians 5:3) will be a political byword. When the reins of government are in the hands of the King of Righteousness, then

“the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance” (Isaiah 32:17).

Finally, in anticipation of the Lord's return, Peter exhorts us, “gird up the loins of your mind” (I Peter 1:13). This may be an allusion to the Children of Israel eating the pass-over with their loins girded” (Exodus 12:11)—with their girdles tightened, bracing up their long flowing robes, they were to be ready to depart for a better land. With this metaphor, Peter calls for a state of readiness and mental alertness in expectation of our being caught up from the Egypt of this world to the Lord in the air!

STUDIES IN THE TABERNACLE

by RAY DAWES

The Ark of the Covenant: Exod. 25:10-22

THE ARK had great importance for Israel. It is given first in the divine instructions for the tabernacle; indeed in one sense, the tabernacle was designed for it. It was the throne of God in the midst of Israel, where He dwelt, and met with Moses and the High Priest. The Ark assumed the central place when the people were on the march, and symbolised the presence of God with them, (cf. Joshua 3:11; ch.6:6).

The Ark is a pre-eminent figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its composition of shittim wood overlaid with gold points again to Him as the God-man; the crown upon the top indicates that Christ risen and glorified is intended. Upon the top of the ark, as a lid, was placed the mercy seat, a solid block of pure gold, the crown keeping it in place and hiding the join from view, On each end of the mercy seat there was a figure of a Cherub, beaten out of the same piece of gold, their wings covering the mercy seat and their faces looking towards it.

An initial purpose for the ark was to contain the law of the Lord, the two tablets of stone, (v. 21). The original two tablets were not thrown down by Moses in anger, but because of the sin of the people. He discerned that taking the tablets into the Camp would immediately expose them to the judgment of God. So he shattered them. The replacements were then safely preserved in the Ark beneath the mercy seat, upon which on the Day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled.

Hence the blood of sacrifice came between the law and the eye of a holy God, thus preserving the people and permitting God to dwell amongst them. The Cherubim who hitherto barred man's approach to God, now steadfastly look with satisfied gaze downward upon the blood on the mercy seat. The men of Bethshemish 1 Samuel 6:19 foolishly looked into the Ark, and thereby exposed themselves to God's judgment and over 50,000 were slain.

Christ is clearly discerned by the spiritual mind in these figures. Psalm 40:8 speaks of the Messiah coming with the law of God in the midst of His heart. The only One who perfectly fulfilled its righteous requirements, Romans 8:3, 4 in His life, and who fully met its penalty in His death on behalf of sinners. Romans 3:25 uses the very word 'mercy seat' (propitiation in A.V.) to describe Christ and His work. God sets Him forth as the only place where a Holy God and a guilty sinner can meet the blood stained mercy seat. The Law fulfilled, its penalty borne, the repentant sinner can be welcomed, cf. Luke 18:13 'be propitious to me . . .'

The Ark was the place of communion and communication, v. 22. Moses it appears had free access into the holy of holies to speak to God face to face; the High Priest was only permitted access annually on the Day of Atonement. Moses received revelations and guidance from before the Ark. This teaches us that revelation and guidance from God to the soul is only effectually made as we are consciously in His presence before the throne of grace. What a privilege! Let us linger in the sanctuary.

Later on we are informed that a pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded were laid up before the Lord within the Ark. Here were tokens of the people's sins. The manna was a constant reminder of their murmurings and dissatisfaction with the heavenly food of God's providing. The rod that budded recalled the rebellion of Korah against the authority of Moses and Aaron. What humbling lessons. May we not similarly fail. The Word of God is the sustenance provided for our spiritual welfare. We are to feed our souls continuously upon it. Many desire still the leeks and garlic of Egypt; let us be satisfied with the manna from Heaven. To feed upon the Word in communion with Christ by the Spirit will strengthen and sustain us in every circumstance of our pilgrimage. We are to own only one authority and that, Christ's

unique Lordship. Many have rebelled, even men of renown cf. Numbers 16 : 2 against Christ's authority—Popes, prelates, priests, and religious organisations and denominations are their offspring. Let us heed the word of Moses 'depart from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing of theirs . . . ' Numbers 16 : 26.

The Ark was the only item of tabernacle furniture that was later transferred to the Temple, 1 Kings 8 : 6. Then, for the first time the staves that were used to bear the Ark were removed cf. Exodus 25 : 15 and 1 Kings 8 : 8. The Ark at last had reached its place of rest. The Temple in contrast to the Tabernacle was to be a permanent dwelling place for God. This projects our thoughts into the future when pilgrim days are at an end and we are at home with the Lord. Remarkably enough we are told that then there was nothing in the Ark but the two tablets of stone. The pot of manna and the flowering rod had probably been stolen by the Philistines when the Ark was in their possession. These facts however lead us to realise that in the glory with the Saviour, there will be no reminder of earthly murmurings or rebellion, all will be forever forgotten but the Law of our God shall stand forever, it shall never pass away.

Honorary Editor : A. M. S. Gooding.

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to :

38, London Road, Kilmarnock, Scotland.

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4. **Romans 16 : 2.** "Receive her in the Lord as becometh saints" is an expression with which we are all familiar, having no reference to the supper, but being an exhortation to the saints at Rome to extend to Phoebe that practical hospitality which she had so bountifully lavished upon others.

5. **3 John 8.** Here John says "We ought to receive such," not referring to an ordinance but commending Gaius for his love and walking in the truth, and for his receiving the brethren who for HIS NAME had gone forth taking nothing of the gentiles and in direct contrast to organised religion which alas is too ready to take anything from anybody "for the good of the cause."

6. **Philippians 2 : 29.** On this occasion Paul exhorts the church at Phillipi to receive Epaphroditus who had worn himself out in the service of the Lord.

7. **Colossians 4 : 10.** This is an exhortation by Paul to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ to receive the erring but forgiven Mark "if he come." IN NONE OF THE FOREGOING IS THERE ANY REFERENCE TO THE SUPPER.

Reception by Private Individuals

Requests regarding receiving one another are sometimes directed to individuals. In Paul's letter to Philemon, verses 12, 15 and 17, the apostle pleads with Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother. Acts 28 : 7 records the fact that Publius received Paul into his house and extended to him three day's hospitality. Herein arises a pertinent thought ; what an admirable thing it would be if believers were in general as desirous of receiving their brethren to their own tables as many are to what is called "The Lord's table." How easy to be generous with that which is not our's, and costs us nothing. One further example of reception by an individual is found in Acts 28 : 30 where we find Paul receiving all who came to him, for preaching or teaching.

Receiving Those who Love the Lord

The accent here is surely on the word "Lord," who said, "If ye love me (ye will) keep my commandments." The first of those commandments recognised by the believers in the church's infancy was baptism. Disobedience to this commandment is hardly a commendation to the breaking of bread.

A Strange Inconsistency

Christendom usually demands a man-ordained individual to preside at the supper and dispense the elements. In his

absence no service can take place . . . Membership of such a community subscribes to the doctrine that a "layman" is not qualified to officiate at the supper. By what circuitous reasoning does that which is wrong in a believer's own circle of fellowship, become legitimate when he enters a company where an "unordained" individual breaks the bread. Consistency would demand that he would refuse rather than expect participation in the supper.

Whom does the Lord Receive ?

In connection with receiving all whom The Lord has received there is a very searching passage in 2 Corinthians 6:17 and 18. "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith The Lord and touch not the unclean thing, and **I WILL RECEIVE YOU**, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith **THE LORD ALMIGHTY**. A parallel portion is found in the Revelation chapter 18, where the **conglomerate mass of organised religion** is described in it's ultimate state as Babylon, and again the heavenly command is "Come out of her my people." It is therefore clear from these passages that to receive those whom The Lord has received is to receive those who have obeyed the command from heaven.

Honorary Editor: A. M. S. Gooding.

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

38, London Road, Kilmarnock, Scotland.

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Mrs. Mackay



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



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The End of the Way

“Thou shalt remember all the way that
the Lord thy God led thee.”—Deut. viii. 2.

The sands have been washed o'er the footprints
Of the Stranger on Galilee's shore,
And the voice that subdued the rough billows
Is heard in Judea no more ;
But the path of that lone Galilean
With joy I will follow today,
**And the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.**

There are so many hills to climb upward,
I often am longing for rest,
But He who appoints me my pathway
Knows just what is needful and best ;
I know in His word He has promised
My strength it shall be as my day,
**And the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.**

He loves me too well to forsake me
Or give me one trial too much ;
All His people have been dearly purchased,
And Satan can never claim such ;
By and by I shall see Him and know Him
In the city of unending day,
**And the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.**

THE THINGS WHICH ARE

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS

Rev. 2 : 12-17

by Dr. JOHN BOYD

THE third of the seven letters to the churches in Asia is directed to that situated in Pergamos, the chief city of Mysia, about fifty miles north of Smyrna. It was a great cultural centre, possessing a large library of 200,000 volumes. It contained the temple of Aesculapius, the god of medicine, whose emblem was a serpent. The worship of the Imperial cult of Rome was indicated by the building in it of a temple in honour of Augustus the emperor. It seems to have been the chief centre of judicial authority, where harsh sentences were meted out to those who refused to worship the emperor, especially the christians.

The Lord introduced Himself to this church as the One who has the sharp two-edged sword. This title is taken from chap. 1:16, where it is seen as proceeding from His mouth (see 2:16). Thus the sword is used metaphorically of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The two-edged nature of the sword emphasises its sharpness (Proverbs 5:4). Such a sword penetrates, divides and lays bare. So the words of the Lord are here seen as penetrating into the inmost secret affairs of the church, separating what is commendable from what is blameworthy, and setting them out plainly before the believers. This is still His function in the assemblies.

The sword is also the emblem of authority (Romans 13:4), so the authoritative words of the Lord command the church to remedy what was wrong. In default, they would be at the peril of the Lord further speaking to them in judgment. The sword, too, is employed by the Lord for the defence of the church against its enemies, whether within or without (v. 16). Well might we believers fear the employment of such words by the Lord against any like tendencies in our assemblies to that which He found in the church at Pergamos.

The Lord then reveals what He knew concerning the church. He knew the difficult circumstances in which the believers lived at Pergamos. Here was situated Satan's seat (or throne, R.V.), that is, the place was so wicked that it

seemed to be the very headquarters of Satan's activity. Does the Lord here refer to the temple of Aesculapius, whose symbol was a great living serpent tended by priests? The serpent in scripture is used metaphorically of Satan (Revelation 12:9). Possibly Pergamos was described as Satan's seat because of the idolatrous practices carried out in this temple. Or, it may be that as Pergamos was the centre of political and judicial activity in the province, whither opponents of the Imperial cult were sent for trial and subsequent martyrdom, it may have been reckoned as the place where Satan was enthroned.

It is good for us to-day to appreciate the fact that the Lord is fully aware of difficult circumstances that surround some assemblies. He knows the Satanic opposition some must endure, and the temptations that beset them. In all our temptations He is the sympathetic High Priest who is able to succour and sustain us.

Then follows the Lord's commentary on the state of the church in Pergamos, both commendation and condemnation. The Lord commends them first positively. Despite all their tribulation and temptation to give up, they had held tenaciously to the name of Christ, to all that this name meant to them—the anointed One, both God and Man, the Saviour who died for them, the living, victorious High Priest in heaven, for whose Second Coming they watched and waited. They still had a true conception of the person and work of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ still delights to see His beloved people holding fast to His name, especially in these days when He is being despised, and His deity and impeccability set aside. How pleased He is to see us holding fast the things most surely believed amongst us!

Next comes the Lord's negative commendation, 'thou didst not deny My faith.' What is implied in 'My faith' is difficult to determine. It may be (a) thy faith in Me, referring to their trust in the atoning work of Christ, or (b) My faith—My faithfulness to God in the work of redemption—their abiding confidence in His finished work, or (c) the faith, the body of truth, that Christ had once for all committed to the saints (Jude 3). Possibly all these are included in 'My faith,' and from these the Pergamene church had not departed, even in their time of fierce persecution. Antipas is set before us as the supreme example of one not denying 'My faith.' He was

‘My witness, My faithful one’ (R.V.); he held fast to the name of Christ rather than to Augustus; he did not deny his faith in Christ; he had witnessed of Him before the heathen court; he remained faithful even unto death in a place where Satan’s dwelling-place was so evident. This is all we know of Antipas. He was not well-known on earth, but oh what a commendation from his Lord!

But the Lord had a few words of condemnation for the church in Pergamos. Whilst it stood fast on the fundamentals of the faith in the face of persecution there was creeping into it insidiously a soul-destroying teaching—the doctrine of Balaam—and worse, it was being tolerated by the church without demur. There were some members who held fast to this false teaching, whilst the majority held fast (same word as in v. 13) the name of the Lord. This doctrine of Balaam is described as two-fold: (1) eating things sacrificed to idols, and (2) committing fornication. When Balaam found himself by reason of God’s prohibition unable to curse Israel he suggested to Balak, his hirer, a way out of the impasse, namely, to cause Israel to commit fornication with the women of Moab (Numbers 31:16). Associated with this fornication was the worship of the Moabitish god, Baal-peor (Numbers 25:3). Because of these things God sent a plague amongst Israel, and destroyed 24,000 of them. Thus Balaam, as his name suggests, destroyed the people of Israel. Possibly this teaching of Balaam as it applied to the church in Pergamos was a spiritual fornication—joining themselves to things contrary to the Word of God, and interfering with the worship of the true God.

It would seem as if here the Lord associated the teaching of Balaam (v. 14) with the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Note the Revised Version ending of the verse, ‘in like manner.’ There is a similarity in the two names. Balaam is a Hebrew word meaning, ‘the devourer of the people,’ whilst the Greek word nikolates means, ‘the overcomer of the people,’ where some lorded it over others in the assembly (v. 6), possibly the beginning of clerisy. In either case the result was the same—the teaching interfered with the growth of the church. There is one difference between Nicolaitism as seen in Ephesus and that found in Pergamos. Ephesus, like the Lord, resented it, but in Pergamos those who held and taught it were tolerated, and not rigorously disciplined. These were the few

things the Lord had against them. Let us ever be quick to discern such doctrine creeping into the assembly, and faithful to discipline those who teach it.

The Lord's exhortation to the Pergamos church was a call to repentance—to repent of their toleration of this soul-destroying doctrine, and of their lack of discipline of the offending teachers. The whole church did not hold this doctrine, but allowed some of their members so to do. and to teach it. This they must remedy.

If the church did not repent the Lord proposed to come to it quickly, and, using the sword of His mouth, make war against the Nicolaitans. If the church would not separate these teachers from their midst the Lord would do so with the sharp double-edged sword capable of penetrating into all sections of the church, and separating those guilty of propagating the wrong doctrine. It will be a word of judgment from the Lord, whose voice is in power and majesty. His powerful voice is manifest in the storm (Psalm 29). With the breath of His lips He slays the wicked (Isaiah 11 : 4), a judgment specially reserved for the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2 : 8). Is the Lord here alluding to the judgment that befell Balaam, whom scripture records as having been slain with the sword (Numbers 31 : 8).

This message is for all who hear that they might heed it. Let them be guided by the Holy Spirit as to how to deal with the introduction of false teaching into the assemblies. If the evil is not dealt with by the assembly the Lord will do so, and it will be a painful process, for the sword of the Lord's mouth is two-edged and sharp.

The Lord has a three-fold promise for the overcomer. (1) He will be given to eat of the hidden manna. Jesus taught that the manna laid up in the ark (Exodus 16 : 33) was a type of Himself come down out of heaven, the true bread of His people. He is now hidden from us as we await His Second Advent. But even at this time we can feed on Him, the bread of life to sustain us in our pathway in the wilderness. (2) He will be given a white stone. The meaning of this symbolism is difficult. The Greek word here translated 'stone' is used for voting (Acts 26 : 10). This is hardly the meaning here. But in classical Greek it is used for a stone on which a king might write a judgment. This is possibly the idea here. White is a frequent symbol for purity in Revelation. Thus the white stone would indicate the Lord's favourable judgement of the

overcomer. (3) He would be given a new name written on the white stone, a new appreciation of the recipient by the Lord. None is made aware of this estimation save him to whom the stone is given. It is a private revelation. Another suggestion concerning this new name is that it is a new way in which the Lord reveals Himself to the overcomer.

Let us then learn the lesson the Lord impressed on the church in Pergamos. In a world where opposition and persecution abound let us keep the assemblies pure ; let us see that proper discipline is exercised if and when such doctrine as that taught by the Nicolaitans is getting a foothold ; let us lay hold on the Lord's promise to the faithful overcomer.

NOTES ON PETER'S EPISTLES

by the late WM. RODGERS

THE middle chapter of 2nd Peter is in many ways a remarkable one. Its impassioned denunciation of the false teachers, whose coming is foretold in its opening verse, sounds like a passage from one of those prophetic writings to which the apostle has just called attention, rather than the production of a New Testament writer. In the course of it he makes use of at least twenty Greek words not found elsewhere in the Scriptures, while certain others, such as the words for "destruction", "corruption", "covetousness", etc., which do occur though rarely elsewhere, he repeats in it with unusual frequency.

On the other hand, the chapter possesses such a similarity to the little epistle of Jude as would suggest that one of the two writers was already acquainted with the work of the other when he wrote ; and much difference of opinion has resulted amongst commentators as to which of them wrote first. A comparison of the portions in which this similarity is most marked will show, I think, that if one has a priority of that kind it is Jude ; and since we have already seen that Peter in his first epistle goes over much of the same ground which Paul had already traversed in Ephesians, etc., and that in certain passages he follows also the very wording of James, it is not surprising to find him in his second letter taking up, in similar fashion, a line of things closely related to one already dealt with by Jude. There is, however, a possibility that the similarity is not due to either writer having had access to the product of the other, but to the fact that each is

giving out in his own way a message of warning to the saints, which at this juncture the Holy Spirit was impressing on both their minds, and possibly on the minds of other leaders amongst them as well.

THE OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Of special interest are the apostle's references in our chapter to three men of Old Testament times ; because in each case we learn something about these which otherwise we should scarcely have known. Concerning Noah we are told that not only was he a "just" or righteous man as he had been declared to be in Gen. 6. 9. and 7. 1, but he was also "a preacher of righteousness," one who, besides preparing against the coming judgment, himself sought to warn his contemporaries.

The other two, Lot and Balaam, are dealt with more fully, the one in verses 6-9 and the other in verses 14-18. Had we not Peter's description of Lot, in which three times over he speaks of him as "righteous," and tells us that he never became so accustomed to "the filthy conversation of the wicked" as to cease to be vexed in his soul by it, we should have been left wondering whether this convert of Abraham was a really saved man after all. And had we not the apostle's reference here, and that in Rev. 2. 14-16, to Balaam's activities, we should scarcely have realised from the Old Testament account of him what an utterly wicked man he was, despite his beautiful speeches. The introduction of the two men in the same passage here may, however, suggest to us a comparison, as well as a contrast ; for while it is made very clear that Balaam was a slave to his own covetousness, it may be asked. What was it but a touch of the same vice that led Lot into Sodom? When Abraham in Gen. 13. 9-13 permitted him to choose in which part of the country he would settle, he "lifted up his eyes" to covet the well watered and fruitful district which bordered on Sodom and the other cities of the plain. If he, like, Abraham, had lifted his eyes a bit further, and "looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God," it is unlikely that he would have taken the course which he did. He seems to have been an early example of those mentioned in 2 Pet. 1. 9. who "cannot see afar off." Balaam might in this respect be thought as having got farther than Lot, for he could say, "I see Him, but not now ; I behold Him, but not nigh" (Num. 24. 17, R.V.); yet

greed of gain and of popularity kept him from having any real desire to participate in the blessings of that far off future, with the result that he, who had cried "Let me die the death of the righteous," died in his sins and in battle against God's people.

WARNINGS AND EXHORTATIONS

Both these illustrations have a warning for us, especially when thought of in connection with the great events foretold in the third chapter ; on the one hand the destruction, more complete than even that of Sodom, of the present earth and "the works that are therein ;" and on the other the emergence of "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Lot saw all that to which he had devoted his energy and toil go up in flames. Balaam, as he peered into the events of the distant future, instead of rejoicing at the prospect, broke out in the sad wail, "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?" Contrast with both the attitude which Peter enjoins upon his readers in the threefold exhortation of his closing chapter. In verse 11 we read, "Seeing then that all these (present) things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness," in verse 14, "Seeing that ye look for such things (as the new heavens and new earth of the preceding verse), be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless ;" and in verse 17, "Seeing ye know these things before (both those of verse 10 and those of verse 13) beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked (that of verses 3-4), fall from your own stedfastness."

SLACKNESS OR SALVATION

The wicked say, "Where is the promise of His coming" (v. 4); but you are to "look for" it (v. 14). They account the Lord's long-suffering to be SLACKNESS ; you are to account it SALVATION (vv. 9-15). His desire "that all should come to repentance" holds back the Day of the Lord (v. 9); your "holy conversation and godliness," especially perhaps through its favourable influence upon those to whom salvation is being offered, "hastens" its coming (vv. 11-12 A.V. & R.V. margin).

You have, to keep you right in these matters, both "the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets," and "the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles" (v. 2, R.V.), that is to say, you have the Old Testament and the New more closely joined together as form-

ing THE SCRIPTURES, here and in verse 16, than perhaps anywhere else. And not least amongst them, you and I have these two letters of Peter in both which he stirs up our pure minds by way of remembrance of the truths already made known through the others. Let us therefore, as in his concluding words, “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

ABRAHAM—FRIEND OF GOD

THE FINAL GREAT TRIAL AND TEST

by **R. WOODHOUSE BEALES**

Chapter 22

“**A**FTER these things” occurs again, firstly in 15:1, after the meeting with Melchizedek where Abraham comprehends the Lord as The Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, now he is to learn of Him in a new way and under a new name “Jehovah Jireh.” Abraham has given up and relinquished one after another of those near and dear to him and now the very best of all is demanded by God. God did test or try Abraham (not tempt in the way of temptation to evil, see the difference in James I). This was the trial of faith, much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried by fire. This was to be such a trial.

We have often heard this episode described in harrowing terms, but these scriptures do not thus depict the scene. A close attention to verses 3, 5 and 8 indicate far otherwise. There is no doubt about it that Abraham expected and knew that Isaac must live if God's declared purposes were to be brought to fruition, and also that he now knew God as the God of Resurrection, though no such resurrection had ever taken place nor had Abraham ever heard of one. He had himself, and so had Sarah, been quickened out of a condition of “death” so he knew that God could do this and his affirmation, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship and **COME AGAIN TO YOU**” shows this clearly. He rose up early in the morning to do this deed, though he apparently did not tell his wife.

This was to be a burnt offering, that is a gift and sweet savour offering to God. Now Abraham had been an idolator and he must have known that human sacrifice was obnoxious

to God, therefore this is another evidence of his reliance upon the God Who could raise the dead. **"WE will come AGAIN to you."** The young men were not to witness this, they could in no wise enter into it. "Abide ye here with the ass" that is as far as they could go, no further. "So they went both of them together" said twice. Perfect harmony and confidence. This is no picture of an old man and a struggling younger man as we have heard it suggested. It is not clear that Isaac apprehended all that was happening, he knew there was no lamb and asks the question but is satisfied with the answer and becomes the willing victim, so we believe.

Now this is not said anywhere in the scriptures to be a type of the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ and yet who can escape the clear implication, but it is rather the obedience of Abraham which is emphasised in the New Testament, and his faith, see Heb. 11:17-19, and note that in this epistle and chapter the life of Abraham is divided into two definite phases, the former of which from his call to the quickening are given in verses 8 to 12, then there is a parenthesis concerning all these people of faith from 13 to 17 and then the offering of Isaac and his "resurrection." This great act then is the climax of this life of faith and completes his education in the knowledge of God. Is not this also strongly implied in Romans 4:24, 25 which completes the section concerning Abraham? It is THIS episode which is referred to by James (2:21-23) and not the preceding ones, when he says that this Abraham was justified by works. This is important to note and then no conflict will be seen between the assertions of Paul and James. If this is so then we have, we feel, justification in seeing in this "sacrifice" and "resurrection" a living type of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we put all the relevant N.T. scriptures together, although Isaac's was but a "figure" of resurrection.

But Abraham is arrested by this urgent double call, "Abraham, Abraham." There are at least seven of these, the others being Moses, Moses; Jacob, Jacob; Samuel, Samuel; Martha, Martha; Simon, Simon; Saul, Saul; all very significant. So Isaac's life is spared. Contrast Rom. 8:32.

In view of Abraham's belief in the God of resurrection, it seems incredible that the disciples of the Lord Jesus found it so difficult to believe that HE was going to rise from the dead, especially as He had spoken to them so clearly about

it, and not only so, to believe when they had that evidence, i.e. after He had so risen, when it is said that when they (probably a greater number than merely the twelve) went to meet Him in Galilee "some doubted" when they had seen Him. Such is unbelief.

Then another wonderful typical thing is seen; the ram caught in the thicket by his horns, not a lamb provided by God indeed but a ram, one with strength and which could have extricated itself, one would suppose, and have got away, but here is the truth of substitution, so clearly taught in the New Testament. Abraham offered him up INSTEAD of his son. A ram was included among the offerings in chapter 15 and the ram figures prominently in the later sacrifices, see Ex. 29 and Lev. 8. Jehovah-Jireh means, The Lord will see, or provide. Both are true and the mount becomes the mount of the Lord, and well it might when one considers its hallowed associations, for it became the site of Solomon's temple with its many sacrifices and the presence of the glory of the Lord. Not only so but in II Sam. 24:18-25 it appears that the same spot was that which was occupied by the threshing floor of Araunah which David purchased on the staying of the plague brought on the people through David's sin in numbering them. If this is so what associations were connected with this place, the place where the plague was stayed and the sacrifice made and then the Temple erected. How this lights up the truths which cluster around the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, where in truth the plague of sin was stayed and where the sacrifice was made, voluntarily and completely. May we know what it is to worship there.

The Lord again repeats His promises and covenant and this time accompanies it with an oath. This is the sixth promise and is quoted in Heb. 6:13-20 showing the immutability of God's promise, confirmed by an oath. Here in Genesis is the fullest and most complete promise, Blessing, Fruitfulness and final Victory for all Abraham's seed, the earthly and the heavenly, in which we believers have our part being the true children of Abraham by faith, the stars of heaven and the sand up on the sea shore indicating this.

Then there follows a short genealogy of Abraham's brother Nahor and this it appears is necessary in order to introduce Rebekah who is to appear so prominently in Abraham's family later on.

The Tabernacle, Tent and Coverings

by RAY DAWES

IT IS NOT generally understood that the embroidered cloth stretched over the boards forming the roof is distinctly described as 'the tabernacle.' It therefore assumes great importance. In fact we could say the purpose of the framework was to hold this covering and display it to view cf. Exodus 35 : 11. It consisted of two lengths each of five equal pieces, joined by blue loops and golden clasps. On top of this, the tabernacle, was placed a slightly larger covering of spun goats hair, again of two lengths joined by blue loops and copper clasps. This covering is called, the Tent. Draped over the whole structure were two skins, the rams skin, dyed red, and the badger's skin, giving ample protection from the weather. Thus we have the inner layer, the tabernacle, the goats hair, the tent, and the two skin coverings.

What do they signify ? Let us approach our study from the outside. Outwardly, the tabernacle was not attractive to the natural eye, the rough badger skin had no appeal. This reminds us of the Saviour when the world viewed Him ; 'there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him' Isa. 53 : 2. Badger skin speaks of the separated life, cf. Ezek. 16 : 10, and the Lord Jesus was separated from this evil world. The believer likewise holds no attraction to the world generally speaking. His separation from its ways and pleasures brings forth their scorn. This separation is essential for just like the badger skin, it is protection of the inner spiritual life which the believer should be seeking to cultivate. Beneath this covering was the ram's skin dyed red. The ram suggests substitution (Gen. 22 : 13) and consecration (Exodus 29). Applied to the Lord Jesus, how true that a closer examination of Him reveals His devotion to death in order to become the substitute for sinners. What mighty love constrained Him ! In relating the thought to ourselves, consecration and self-sacrifice on behalf of others should mark us too. Rough skin was the badge of the prophetic office, e.g. Elijah, John the Baptist. The outward view of the separated life must be on account of these positive spiritual activities Godward.

Then there is the goat's hair. Goats were used on the Day of Atonement as sacrifices for sin in its entirety, as it affected people and priests. So we have a deeper thought of Christ's

work. He has finally and fully dealt with every aspect of sin, to the eternal glory of God, and blessing of man. He has reconciled all things to Himself so that God can forever enjoy His people and have them dwelling with Him. We are to possess this truth. The thought of sin and guilt before God is to be banished, it must not be allowed to disturb the soul's rest in Christ. A settled conviction of this purges the conscience and frees the soul to reach for further truth.

Underneath lay the embroidered tabernacle. The colours and cherubim displaying again the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its lovely colours and skilful art work were seen only by the priests as they ministered in the sanctuary. The perfections of the Lord are hidden to natural eyes. Only priests who draw near to God discover His loveliness. The link with John 1 : 14 is strong here. The word 'dwelt' is 'tabernacled' amongst us and we beheld His glory.' The disciples were near to Him and the glory the world failed to appreciate was manifest to them. The more we learn of Christ the more glory we see. It is often so different with us. We can be so superficial there's nothing beneath the surface. Men and women of God however, have inner graces that often remain undetected by the natural or carnal eye. God desires truth in the inner parts (Ps. 51 : 6) and to behold us 'all glorious within' (Ps. 45 : 13).

RECOVERY AND ORDER

A comparison of Nehemiah and 1 Corinthians

by BRYAN SMITH

(No. 6)

CONTINUING in Nehemiah 11 we read of the priests and Levites (v. 10-18), then of the residue of the people including the singers and porters, (v. 19-24). All had to do with the service of the house of God. The apostle recommends to the Corinthians the gift of prophecy. (1 Corinthians 14 : 1). But is not the gift of tongues a more spiritual gift? The apostle deals with the relative value of both in regard to the edification of the assembly (v. 2-20). Then he deals with both in regard to those outside of the assembly (v. 21-25). But what exactly is the speaking in a tongue? We cannot see that the language of these verses points to an intermittent muttering, an incoherent jargon, a babble of confused sounds. Paul gives thanks to God (v. 18) surely not to babble. The

term is the same in Acts 2. Is it foreign languages? (Darby, Heading). "It means a human language, and nothing else" (Broadbent). But what are they communicating—the gospel? The whole chapter answers, NO. "I speak in a tongue more than you all" (v. 18 J.N.D.) refers "to his constant use of Greek in his missionary journeys rather than his mother tongue Hebrew" (Heading). But did Paul learn Greek naturally or supernaturally. "He does not say, because I speak in more tongues than you all, as he would require to do if he was thinking of actually existing foreign tongues" (Godet). Paul is indicating that he is not adverse to the gift because he does not himself possess it. Is it not a language unknown to the speaker's understanding, miraculously spoken? (Vine, Bruce, Weiss). And what was the purpose of this miracle language? "Paul tells us the purpose of it was to attract unbelievers" (Stuart). But in Acts 2 the unbeliever says "ye are drunk." Here, he says "ye are mad." It is a judicial voice to the unsaved who had refused to hear. (1 Corinthians 14, 21, 22). But who are the "unlearned or unbelievers?" "Visitors both saved and unsaved" (McShane). We submit, in the first, persons unacquainted with Christianity who may or may not respond to Divine revelation. In the other, persons who have rejected faith. But asks someone, "how explain Acts 2?" The disciples spoke in this miracle language, in Jerusalem, and it was interpreted by the Holy Spirit to the Jews "of the dispersion" so that each heard in their own local dialect. It was not so with some of Judaea who could not "hear" what was said. The Lord Jesus, in His ministry in Judaea and Jerusalem, had spoken to them in a language they understood. Now they must beware of Divine retribution. "When God speaks intelligibly, it is to reveal (open) Himself to His people; when He speaks unintelligibly, it is because He must hide (close) Himself from them" (Kling). The apostle concludes by applying what he has said to the assembly gatherings. (1 Corinthians 14 : 23-40). But two verses call for particular comment. "Let the prophets speak two or three" (v. 29). The same restriction applies, as with the tongue, only he is not prepared to word it so decidedly. The capacity of the saints does not seem in question. "And let the other judge" Who are they? The other prophets (Darby, Heading). It is "others of the same kind." But see 1 Corinthians 12 : 9, 10 (J.N.D.) for "others of the same kind." One would have expected the apostle to have said, and let the rest judge.

The other church members (Grant, Bruce, Kelly). They are responsible to sift what they hear. (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5 : 20, 21). But are they all expected to discern prophetic revelation given by Divine inspiration ? Those gifted with the discerning of spirits. (Vine, Meyer). (See 1 Corinthians 12, v. 10). The man with the gift of tongues must be followed by the man gifted to interpret the tongue. There is a like qualification in relation to the gift of prophecy. He must be prepared to submit his ministry to those exercising the gift of discerning of spirits. "Let your women keep silence in the churches : for it is not permitted unto them to speak." (v. 34). It is suggested that this may mean whisperings and private conversations, (Marsh). But the same word is used of God Himself speaking (v. 21) and "twenty one times of the exercise of the gifts of tongues and of prophecy" (Hoste). "There is plenty of scope for sisters to exercise a gift of teaching in other places apart from an assembly gathering. They are exhorted by Paul to teach the young women." Titus 2 : 3-5 (Heading). Yes, by example and domestic instruction, in relation to home duties, workers at home etc.

CAMEOS OF CHRIST (3)

by **JOHN B. D. PAGE**

"The High and Lofty One"

THE peace and prosperity of Solomon's day had passed, and Isaiah prophesied to the impoverished and divided kingdom of Judah. In the year that King Uzziah died from leprosy which he contracted by transgressing against the Lord when he entered the temple to burn incense upon the golden altar, making himself a king-priest, Isaiah had a vision of the true King-Priest (11 Chronicles 26 : 16-19, and Isaiah 6 : 1-5). The scene was in heaven where he saw a throne, which absorbed his attention. Probably, the prophet had a mental picture of the earthly counterpart made by Solomon, for no throne in Scripture is described so fully. This great throne was made of ivory and overlaid with pure gold. There were six steps to the throne and its gold footstool. Above it, there was a canopy. On either side of the two arm-rests, there stood a lion. The steps were flanked by twelve lions, one at the end of each step. Of this throne, Holy Writ says, "there was not the like in any kingdom." See 1 Kings 10 : 18-20, and 11 Chronicles 9 : 17-19.

Solomon's throne had six steps to give it height, and apparently in ancient times the greatness of a monarch was gauged by the height of his throne. Hence, the higher the throne, the greater the monarch! In his vision, Isaiah was impressed by the height of the heavenly throne, for it was "high and lifted up,"—higher than any earthly throne. But, oh, the greatness of the Occupant! The prophet saw "the Lord" (or, Adonai) sitting upon the throne. Not Jehovah, the God of salvation, or Elohim, the Creator-God, but Adonai, the meaning of which is "sovereign" or "absolute Lord," was enthroned. The Apostle John makes it known that on this occasion the glory seen by Isaiah was that of the Pre-incarnate Christ (John 12 : 41).

An allusion to the same throne is undoubtedly in Psalm 110 : 1, "The LORD (or, Jehovah) said unto my Lord (or, Adonai), Sit thou at my right hand . . ." which signifies an equality between the Persons seated—an equality between the Persons of the Godhead. Adonai is not inferior to, but equal with, Jehovah. When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, reached the climax of his sermon, the resurrection of Christ, he quoted this Psalm to verify that Jesus, Whom men had crucified but God raised from the dead, is now exalted and enthroned at the right hand of God. The Psalmist had in mind an eastern throne which is broader than a single-seated throne in the west, enabling a monarch to honour a person by sitting with him upon his throne. At His ascension into heaven, Jesus sat "on the right hand of God," whereby God exalted Him, making Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2 : 32-36, cp. Philippians 2 : 9). The throne in heaven is the highest of all thrones, and its exalted Occupant, the Risen Christ, is the greatest of all sovereigns!

Reverting to Isaiah's vision, the seer saw not only "Adonai sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" but also "His train filled the temple." The word "train" is rendered "hem" in Exodus 28 : 33f in respect of the ankle-length blue robe of the ephod, one of the garments of glory and beauty, worn exclusively by the high priest.

Shocked by king Uzziah usurping the priest's office in that "exceeding magnificent" temple, built of marble and overlaid with gold, the prophet had a vision of the Pre-incarnate Christ as the true King-Priest, whose radiant glory filled the heavenly temple.

In this day of grace, the Risen Christ is our "High Priest, who sits on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8 : 1), where he makes intercession for us (Rom. 8 : 34). In the coming millennial age, this same Christ will be "a Priest upon His throne" (Zechariah 6 : 13), the true King-Priest, whom Isaiah beheld in his vision.

DANIEL THE PROPHET

by the late A. J. ATKINS

Chapter 2

NO world empire has arisen since the Greco-Macedonian except the Roman, but the Roman power did not completely fulfil all the detail given. It is evident therefore, that this empire, represented by the feet and toes of the image and by the fourth beast, and partly fulfilled in the history of Roman power, is not named in Scripture because the complete fulfilment awaits the rise of a future power with the same characteristics. In 146 B.C. Greece was conquered and became a Roman province and in 65 B.C. Syria also was taken over, whilst in 63 B.C. Jerusalem was captured by Pompey. Thus the mighty Caesar Augustus had power to issue the decree "that all the world should be enrolled" Luke 2, 1, causing Joseph and Mary to go up from Galilee to Bethlehem.

The characteristics of this fourth empire "strong as iron . . . as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things . . . crusheth all things" is an exact description of the fierce might of the Roman power. But whereas Nebuchadnezzar, "the head of gold" derived his authority from the God in heaven, the silver represented a rule resting on nobility of person and birth, the nobles being equal in rank. The inferior metal brass represents an authority of an aristocracy, not of birth, but of individual influence, whilst the further inferior iron, iron and clay, portrayed an emperor appointed by popular military election and the clay, that which is of the earth, stands for democratic rule, rule by the people. Dan. 2.43.

The conditions represented in the dream by the ten toes, "in the days of those kings" v. 44, has never yet been fulfilled, neither has the following event, "a stone cut out without hands" v. 45, shattering the image by smiting on its feet, and subsequently becoming "a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" v. 44. Whilst the former Roman empire is well portrayed by the legs and feet of the image, there is evidently

a break in the unfolding not revealed to Daniel, to permit God's purposes in grace to be fulfilled. Though Daniel could not know it, God knew that in prophetic utterances a break of years can elapse before the completion of fulfilling. As the Lord Jesus took the roll in the synagogue in Nazareth, and read from Isaiah 61 : 1, 2, He stopped in the midst of the verse, for "the day of vengeance of our God" had not come, yet. He could say of the preceding part of the verses "today hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears" Luke 4 : 18-21. Again Zech. 9 : 9 was fulfilled when the Lord rode up into Jerusalem (Matt. 21 : 4-5) but the remainder, v. 10, awaits fulfilment.

The legs and feet of iron represent the Roman empire which continued some five centuries after the death of Lord Jesus, ultimately dividing into two parts, an Eastern and a Western empire. Although during the fifth and sixth centuries hordes from the north overran the empire and it was divided into several kingdoms, varying both in number and composition, at no time has it yet existed as an empire of ten kingdoms as required by verses 42 to 44. Therefore it cannot rightly be said that conditions have existed when the "stone cut out without hands" could smite on the toes of the image to shatter the whole image making it as "chaff of the summer threshing floors . . . that no place was found for them" as stated in v. 34/5.

The stone which became a great mountain is interpreted by Daniel as a kingdom. "The God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people . . . it shall stand for ever" v. 44. "The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure" v. 45. The king Nebuchadnezzar would understand much by a kingdom compared to stone. Babylon produced no stone so all its buildings were of brick, except a few of the most important made of lime-stone brought from the enemy Assyria. Babylon's Sacred Way was paved with such lime-stone, as the way devoted to religious processions. Furthermore, when royal grants gave possession of lands, imported boundary stones were set up, and under the curse of the gods inscribed on such stones penalties would fall on any who removed the stones. The "stone cut out" would suggest a kingdom viewed as hostile to the Gentile kingdoms, linking sacred matters with well defined unalterable limits.

The "great mountain . . . filled the whole earth." This again would impress the monarch whose kingdom was surrounded by swamps, and endangered by floods so that every builder aimed at security by building on a height, making the work massive like a mountain.

To Daniel, the stone would speak of the corner stone described by the Psalmist. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing ; it is marvellous in our eyes " Psalm 118 : 22, 23 verses quoted by the Lord as speaking of Himself when telling the parable of his rejection by the Jewish nation Matt. 21 : 40, 42, and He also linked it with the words of Isaiah, speaking of a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence on which many would fall and be broken, Isaiah 8 : 14, 15, Matt. 21 : 43, 45. Similarly Isaiah says " Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation " Isaiah 28 : 16. So Paul, speaking of Israel's blindness, quotes the verse, explaining that they sought a righteousness by works and not by faith, Romans 9 : 32, 33. Soon, when the Lord returns, the stone will fall in judgment when the day of the Lord will come, 2 Pet. 3 : 10, 11, and the " elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat." At His first coming our Lord was indeed set at nought of the builders. His second coming " to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of their works of ungodliness " Jude 15 will indeed be as catastrophic as suggested by the picture of the stone crashing on the feet of the image for its destruction. The Psalmist's words " Thou shalt break the nations with a rod of iron : Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, Psalm 2 v. 9 will be fulfilled as the prelude to the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy " the Lord shall be king over all the earth " Zech. 14.9.

On listening to the interpretation, the mighty monarch is constrained to acknowledge that Daniel's God " is the God of gods and Lord of Kings, and a revealer of secrets " v. 47, and also to prostrate himself before Daniel in worship, v. 46. So, when the Lord fulfils His word, Gentile nations will be made to gather Israel from afar, and they will bow before repentant Israel. " They shall bring Thy sons in their bosom . . . kings shall be thy nursing fathers . . . they shall bow down to thee . . . and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, and they that wait for Me shall not be ashamed " Isa. 49 : 22, 23.

Typical of the blessing which the faithful Jewish remnant will receive from Gentile powers, Daniel received great gifts and was exalted to a place of supreme honour. In his exaltation, Daniel was mindful of his three friends, so that they shared his glory and power. Our blessed Lord in His exaltation will remember us and give us a place. "Father . . . I will that where I am, they also may be with Me . . . the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them." John 17 v. 24, 22.

It is worth noting that whilst commentators are generally agreed that the fourth empire is the Roman, G. H. Lang strongly rejects this interpretation (see *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel* published 1940 Third edition 1942). Contending that the fourth kingdom is not named in Scripture and that the Roman empire has no place in prophecy, that there is no justification for assuming a break in the continuity as required by the interval before the ten kings, he avers that the interpretation commences with the guiding statement "thou art the head of gold"—that is a personal ruler. He suggests that the image is a continuous picture of Babylon, from its commencement as a world empire under Nebuchadnezzar until its final overthrow when its ruler is cast into the lake of fire Rev. 19.20. This interpretation will obviously call for a different interpretation of Daniel's visions of the four beasts in Daniel ch. 7 and ch. 8 which are generally understood by most commentators to be a fresh view of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

RECEPTION TO — WHAT ?

by C. TREVOR HUSSEY

IN VIEW of the general confusion of thought and variety of practice regarding visitors to scriptural assemblies, a re-examination of the word of God on the matter is important, particularly in days when church truths are regarded by some as non-essential, or relegated to the realm of "traditions of men."

The well-known, oft quoted, but oft ignored statement of Acts 2:41 and 42 state the original practice clearly and unambiguously. "They that gladly received His word were baptised . . . and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." This passage has been translated as "and in THE fellowship and in THE prayers," having in view nothing of a

casual or individual nature but rather indicating a regular and corporate gathering.

There have been frequent objections to the phrase "guarding the table" on the ground that the expression is not found in the Scriptures. This is a wise objection, particularly if consistently applied to all statements regarding assembly principles. However, is it not more objectionable to use an expression that is scriptural and take it out of its context and use it to propagate an unscriptural doctrine. "Guarding the table" may not be literally scriptural, but overseers have a solemn responsibility to see that the order of Acts 2 : 41-42 is maintained.

Receiving Those Whom the Lord has Received

This expression is often used to justify participation in the Lord's supper by all whom the Lord has received, i.e. all who are saved, perhaps having in mind Romans ch. 15, v. 7. The apostle here is not enunciating a general principle but is dealing specifically with the case of a weak brother who has a conscientious objection with regard to meats, observance of special days etc., who is not to be refused or ridden over roughshod by his stronger brother who has no such objection, and of course verse 1 of chapter 14 in connection with this matter refers not to the table but to fellowship in the assembly.

Reception by The Church

It would be a fruitless task to seek an example of anyone in the scriptures being received to The Lord's supper, sometimes erroneously referred to as The Lord's table, but there are many examples of believers being received by the local church into its circle of fellowship.

1. Acts 9 : 26. Paul assayed to join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem, (not to break bread) and because they were not prepared to receive him because of his past reputation, it required the commendation of Barnabas to secure Paul's admission to their fellowship.

2. Acts 15 : 4. Paul and Barnabas were **received** by the church at Jerusalem **to give a missionary report**, having been sent forth by the Holy Ghost from Antioch. (Acts 13)

3. Acts 18 : 27 The brethren at Ephesus, after Aquila and Priscilla, had instructed Apollos in the word, instructed the brethren of Achaia to **receive him that he might continue the exercise of his gift** among them.